

# Close by Distance

*Norwegian Vacationers' Establishment of Second Homes  
in Natal, Brazil.*

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# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>   | <b>I</b>  |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>  | <b>IV</b> |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>  | <b>V</b>  |
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE.....                                       | 1         |
| 1.2 SECOND HOMES IN PERSPECTIVE.....  | 4         |
| 1.2.1 <i>Norwegian Secondary Settlement.....</i>                                | <i>4</i>  |
| 1.2.2 <i>Vacation Properties as Second Homes .....</i>                          | <i>6</i>  |
| 1.2.3 <i>Studying Second Homes .....</i>  | <i>7</i>  |
| 1.2.4 <i>Second Homes as a Consumption Practice.....</i>                        | <i>8</i>  |
| 1.3 METHODS AND LOCATION .....  | 10        |
| 1.3.1 <i>Qualitative Research.....</i>  | <i>11</i> |
| 1.3.2 <i>Brazil and the Location.....</i>                                       | <i>19</i> |
| 1.4 STRUCTURE OF CONTENTS .....   | 23        |
| <b>2. DREAM HOMES IN BRAZIL.....</b>  | <b>25</b> |
| 2.1 MOTIVATIONS OF SECOND HOME OWNERSHIP .....                                  | 25        |
| 2.1.1 <i>Brazil as the Exotic Location .....</i>                                | <i>26</i> |
| 2.1.2 <i>An Adventurous Vacation.....</i>                                       | <i>27</i> |
| 2.1.3 <i>Escaping Everyday Life in Norway.....</i>                              | <i>31</i> |
| 2.1.4 <i>Learning Through Local Contact.....</i>                                | <i>32</i> |
| 2.1.5 <i>Long-Term Perspectives and The Elusive Category of Investment.....</i> | <i>35</i> |
| <b>3. MEDIATING EXPERIENCE .....</b>  | <b>38</b> |

## II

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|           |   |           |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 3.1       | SOCIAL NETWORKS .....   | 38        |
| 3.2       | “VISNINGSTURER” .....   | 43        |
| 3.3       | “SERVICO PARA ESTRANGEIROS” .....                                   | 46        |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>ESTABLISHING HOMES AND TRANSFERRING THE KNOWN .....</b>          | <b>50</b> |
| 4.1       | EXTENSION OF TRADITION? .....                                       | 50        |
| 4.1.1     | <i>Work, Leisure and Personal Relations to Home</i> .....           | 51        |
| 4.1.2     | <i>Shaping Homes Away From Everyday Life</i> .....                  | 56        |
| 4.2       | THE KNOWN THROUGH NATIONALITY .....                                 | 62        |
| 4.2.1     | <i>Nationality in Acquisition</i> .....                             | 62        |
| 4.2.2     | <i>Organizing a Housing Cooperative</i> .....                       | 65        |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>MAPPING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS .....</b>                            | <b>68</b> |
| 5.1       | A NORWEGIAN SOCIAL COMMUNITY .....                                  | 68        |
| 5.1.1     | <i>Norwegian Condominiums</i> .....                                 | 69        |
| 5.1.2     | <i>Norwegian Neighbourliness</i> .....                              | 71        |
| 5.1.3     | <i>Norwegians in an Extended Social Circuit</i> .....               | 77        |
| 5.2       | ENCOUNTERING BRAZILIANS .....                                       | 80        |
| 5.2.1     | <i>Perceptions of the Brazilian</i> .....                           | 80        |
| 5.2.2     | <i>Facing the Local Community</i> .....                             | 83        |
| 5.2.3     | <i>Meaningful Encounters</i> .....                                  | 88        |
| 5.2.4     | <i>Language and It’s Significance for Social Interactions</i> ..... | 90        |
| <b>6.</b> | <b>KEEPING THE KNOWN CLOSE AND THE UNKNOWN AT A DISTANCE .....</b>  | <b>96</b> |
| 6.1       | THE UNKNOWN AT A DISTANCE .....                                     | 96        |
| 6.1.1     | <i>Culture and Difference</i> .....                                 | 97        |
| 6.1.2     | <i>The “Other”</i> .....  | 99        |

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|       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 6.2   | THE KNOWN CLOSER .....                           | 101 |
| 6.2.1 | <i>An Issue of Safety</i> .....                  | 102 |
| 6.3   | CIRCLING RELATIONS.....                          | 104 |
| 6.3.1 | <i>Circles of Interactions</i> .....             | 105 |
| 6.4   | SECOND HOMES AS A BASE - CLOSE BY DISTANCE ..... | 107 |
| 6.4.1 | <i>Risks and Possibilities</i> .....             | 108 |
| 6.4.2 | <i>To Seek Out and Withdraw</i> .....            | 109 |
| 7.    | CONCLUSION .....                                 | 114 |
|       | BIBLIOGRAPHY .....                               | 117 |

## List of Figures

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Figure 1: Map of Natal and its outskirts</b>     | <b>21</b>  |
| <b>Figure 2: Diagram of circles of interactions</b> | <b>105</b> |

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# 1. Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis, and details, my motives, intentions and background for conducting a study of Norwegian vacationers' establishment of second homes in Brazil. Furthermore, this chapter deals with conceptualizations and perspectives that I have used to conduct the study, and specifies the main focus of the thesis. Finally, it is a treatise of the methods that have been applied to obtain significant documentation of data, and emphasizes the location of study. Toward the end of the chapter, I have provided a list of contents, as a guide to further reading of the text, implying the direction in which the thesis is heading. This introduction thus works as a frame of reference for the remainder of the thesis.

## 1.1 Project Background and Objective

Owning different types of property for holiday purposes is certainly not a new phenomenon for Norwegians, but, it seems, an increasingly popular one. The increase in the number of such vacation properties abroad has accelerated rapidly over the last few years. This increase is also true for the purchase of properties at greater distances from home, preferably on other continents, such as America, Africa and Asia. Estimates by *Prognosesenteret* show that the number of such purchases has doubled in the course of the last five years, reaching its peak in 2006 with more than 8000 households purchasing vacation properties outside of Norway<sup>1</sup>. The same research company predicts, based on surveys that as many as 100,000 Norwegians want to purchase vacation properties outside of their country. Based on the fact that a Norwegian real-estate agency managed to sell all apartments of a

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<sup>1</sup> <http://forbruker.no/bolig/article1804426.ece> (16.07.07)

condominium in Brazil within three days in 2005, it seems that Norwegian secondary settlement in Brazil deserves closer attention.

In this thesis I will investigate the establishment of Norwegian second homes in the area of Natal in Brazil. As many vacationing Norwegians have settled for a recurring short period in a country so far away from their first home, I want to have a closer look at how such settlements take place. By looking both at its acquisitions and uses, I will show how a purchase of property may, through the use of it, ultimately turn into a second *home* for its owners. Closer investigation reveals that ideas and initial motivations present in acquisitions changed with the use of the second home. Where the possibility to experience elements of unknown character and adventures dominated motivations for second home purchases, it was in fact the owners' explicit concern with feeling safe that dominated the further use of the second home. I will thus make a claim in the thesis that the establishment of homes were done with specific emphasis upon promoting a subjective feeling of safety. Further, I will show how implementations of the familiar were especially relevant in a context initially believed to be rather uncertain.

Establishment of *home*, I argue, reveals transferral of familiar elements known from tradition<sup>2</sup>. It also represents an explicit concern with nationality<sup>3</sup> and a community of Norwegians. In the second home context, I found there to be a specific relation between that of known and unknown character for the owners. This was particularly evident in the social interactions that took place between the owners and their surroundings. In that, a mapping of social interactions that I present later in the thesis show how the owners kept what is

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<sup>2</sup> Tradition is through the thesis a way to describe "invented traditions" as used by Eric Hobsbawm. He refers to traditions as "those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period and establishing themselves with great rapidity" (1992:1). This will be dealt with in part 4.1, in form of a Norwegian cottage tradition.

<sup>3</sup> I do not mean nationality as an ideology, but refer to it as a way to show how the second home owners usually distinguished groups of people according to being of different nationalities. See Chapter 4 and 5.

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known to them close and the unfamiliar, perceived to be unsafe, at a distance. My aim with this thesis is to show how these second homes became establishments of safety for my informants. Further, it is to investigate the relationship between closeness and distance that allowed owners to seek out what was unknown and adventurous while at the same time relating to familiar aspects of home and close social relations to those of the same nationality. The main line of argument is thereby placed within the relation between close and distance<sup>4</sup>, and that this plays a key role in the use of the home away from home in a foreign country as Brazil. From this analysis it will be apparent how the establishment of second homes enables its owners to be close to the challenging unknown, through a certain distance.

My motivation for writing this thesis was the fact that it could provide new knowledge for the study of second homes, as nothing as yet has been done on Norwegian second home ownership in Brazil. Second home settlement on other continents brings with it different implications than those closer to home. Since there is only one way to get from Norway to the second home in Brazil, i.e. by air, the environmental consequences of travelling back and forth could be critical. Also, the Norwegian presence may have great cultural implications for a local community. While both the global and local environment may suffer from such second home settlement, paying attention to the social context of the second home establishment is important. There could be much to learn from studying this type of practice, and hopefully it may provoke further inquiry into its long-term consequences.

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<sup>4</sup> I am not alone in examining the close-distance relation as it has also been done by Mazzarella (2003) who investigated marketing and advertisements in India. She found that it was constructing a double structure of the commodity and also the consumer image which was placed in between the modern and traditional and, local and global.

## 1.2 Second Homes in Perspective

This section deals with second homes in particular, presenting a historical dimension with its forms and uses. It will also provide an outline of my reasons for using the term *second home*. Building on issues that put second homes in perspective, I attend to the study of such vacation forms in Brazil by emphasizing the ways in which second home settlement may be studied as a practice of consumption.

### 1.2.1 Norwegian Secondary Settlement

The relation between work and amusement, obligation and pleasure are often discussed when *leisure* is described by different researchers. Serving the present purpose, leisure could be seen as the time one chooses to spend, each in his/her own way, in-between work and rest. This time could be filled with, among other things, a vacation. The individual's right to vacation was established by law in 1947, emphasizing its significance for the individual's personal development, as it provides opportunities to pursue various interests and to undertake journeys (Klepp 1993:8). Thus, leisure was set apart from obligations and with the possibility of taking a vacation; it became the symbol of a new age, and a term with which to embrace the modern Norway. Today, taking a vacation for most people means doing what they want the most, in a relaxing way.

A communion that had been sought out through different summer-home communities was a solid establishment for many vacationing Norwegians until the 1960s. By that time, cultural changes in Norwegian society, along with a general increase in affluence and free accessibility to purchase cars, incited a movement away from the seeking out of communion, toward an emphasis on private life in a vacation setting (Klepp 1993:12f). These changes implied a possibility for more people to spend leisure time in their own vacation properties, where family life became "the centre of existence" (Klepp 1993:13,

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my translation). Summer houses which had mainly been reserved for the elite were now made available for the average Norwegian to enjoy. In that way, second home tourism in Norway has long traditions (Vittersø 2007:266).

Leisure time may nowadays be employed to travel to a privately owned vacation home, either domestic or international. Ranging from tourists to long-term travellers to emigrants, Norwegian settlement in other countries has taken a number of forms. A tradition of summer homes, weekend homes and cottages has existed in Norway for a long time as a way to escape from waged labour in the city, and closeness to Norwegians' vacation properties has seemed crucial. The belief has been held that; "most second home owners live close to their property" (Hall and Müller 2004:8), but with the development in the location of such settlements, this claim seems less valid. In recent decades, Norwegians have settled for short or long terms in locations abroad, ever since tours by chartered planes made travel accessible to the masses.

*Prognosesenteret* claim that as many as one out of every three foreign second home purchases by Norwegians have been established along the Spanish coastline<sup>5</sup>. The sale of properties in the area around Costa del Sol in Spain begun in 1963, mostly to British citizens. New laws passed in 1970 and 1986 opened for, and made it easier for, people of foreign nationalities to purchase properties (King, et al. 2000). This was the beginning of increased emigration and long term tourism in Spain. It is estimated that in the 1900s, about 1.5 million domestic buildings and apartments were built in Spain for people of foreign nationalities (Skjæveland 2005:6). The market for purchase of vacation properties abroad has since expanded. Whereas 20,000 vacation properties were established in Norway in the period 2001-2006, 15,000 vacation properties was acquired abroad (Vittersø 2007:267). That means that

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<sup>5</sup> Aftenposten, 17.09.06: pp.6-7

over 55,000 Norwegian households today have their second (or third) home abroad (Hille, et al. 2007).

The idea that second home owners establish second homes close to their first home does not seem to hold ground, as the construction of second homes on other continents is becoming increasingly common. Brazil, being quite distant in relation to Norway, only enable visitation to the second home once or twice a year. As such, it does not seem to matter where the primary residence is located any more. As Hall and Müller claim second home settlement to be about “a growing number of households in the developed world with the ability to allocate their time independently of a single workplace, and so are able to adopt more mobile lifestyles, and may have several homes” (2004: 6), second home location appears to be a fluent category that depends more on social factors than on time and space.

### **1.2.2 Vacation Properties as Second Homes**

For many, *home* is very much a dynamic and fluid concept (Duval 2004:87). How to define a second home may therefore vary accordingly. One way in which to use the term “second home” is as an umbrella consisting of recreational homes, vacation homes, summer homes, cottages and weekend homes, varying according to an idea of use (Hall and Müller 2004:4). In recognition of second homes as “property owned [...] as the occasional residence of a household that usually lives elsewhere” (Coppock 1977:4), describing something as a *second* home supposes the existence of a *first* home. The second home thus represents a travel from what we usually term as home to a vacation home. Applied to my informants, their second home is located in Brazil, while their first home is firmly established in Norway.

Although a continuously rented or borrowed vacation property might be considered a second home, I will tie second homes in Brazil to ownership, connecting the vacation property to its users. In accordance with Marsden’s

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recognition of four categories of holiday homes<sup>6</sup>, the second homes in Brazil belong to the category of “private holiday homes” being characterized by visits on holidays by family and non-paying guests (Coppock 1977:2). I will be treating vacation properties abroad as second homes in order to imply a certain *construction* and *use* of it (Hall and Müller 2004:4). This notion will be distinctly separate from cottages and weekend homes, because using the vacation property as a weekend home is not physically possible, due to the significant geographical distance. Furthermore, the use of the term “cottage” is not an option, considering that my informants themselves found this notion to be categorically different from their second home in Brazil. Second homes can thus represent “the destination of a substantial proportion of domestic and international travellers” (Hall and Müller 2004:3). Most seasonal movements between homes have traditionally been related to movements within countries. However, in the case of movement across geographically defined borders, how may a type of second home be constructed? As it may bring with it other implications, the generic term second *home* may be given a specific meaning by the individuals who own such vacation properties abroad.

### 1.2.3 Studying Second Homes

The academic interest in second homes mainly relates to issues of leisure and tourism<sup>7</sup>. It has also been studied in relation to migration, where Appadurai’s idea of global “ethnoscapes” (1996) and Urrys notion of “global mobilities” (1995) have been in focus. Additionally, planners and other consultants who conduct the development and measure of economical activities have employed second home settlements as an economical development tool. Many academic

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<sup>6</sup> That is: private holiday homes, intermittently commercial holiday homes, intermittently private holiday homes and commercial holiday homes (Coppock 1977:2)

<sup>7</sup> I use tourism here as Hudman and Hawkins “Tourism denotes the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at these destinations. Most of this movement is international in character and much of it is a leisure activity” (1989:4).

studies (mainly ethnographies and cottage documentations) have been carried out in relation to Norwegian second home settlements within Norway<sup>8</sup>, but far fewer deal with second homes developed through vacation properties abroad. Similarly, the more recent phenomenon of second home settlement on other continents has yet to become a topic of academic interest in its own right.

Some attention has been devoted to the European phenomenon of long term settlement and emigration from northern to southern Europe<sup>9</sup>. Linda K. Novak (2003) has written an anthropological thesis about long term settlement on the south coast of Spain, describing how the lives of the people in Sabinillas have been affected by this form of *boligturisme*. Her thesis is representative of how anthropological as well as sociological studies have mainly revolved around the social and cultural impacts of such settlement on the local communities in question. There is, accordingly, a lack of comparable data on how the ownership of second home settlements on other continents is seen in the eyes of the “settler”. My research has revealed that the ownership of vacation properties can be better understood when viewed as a consumption practice rather than a form for tourism. In this thesis, I will use the framework of consumption to look directly at the establishment of second homes on another continent.

#### **1.2.4 Second Homes as a Consumption Practice**

This thesis suggests a connection between ways in which to spend leisure time and a practice of consumption, through obtaining and using second homes. Owning things, interacting with things and shopping for things are all aspects of consumption that are important to many people in modern industrial

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<sup>8</sup> See amongst others: Hald (1992), Eggset (1991), and Klepp and Thorsen (1993)

<sup>9</sup> See amongst others: King, Warnes and Williams (2000), Gustafson (2002), Strøm (1998) and Skjæveland (2005)



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societies (Wilhite and Lutzenhiser 1999:285). By and large, it was also of importance to my informants in this study. Bernard and Spencer define consumption as “[...] the meaningful use people make of the objects that are associated with them. The use can be things, ideas or relationships; the association can range from ownership to contemplation” (1998:128). This broad definition of consumption indicates some important understandings of the term. When drawing upon the idea that people make meaningful use of commodities and that this meaning is inscribed in its forms as well as their uses, a foundation for studying consumption is established.

### *A Meaningful Use of Things and Ideas*

*Commodity* functions first and foremost as a concept with which to describe *things*, material things which according to Appadurai may be “objects of economical value” (1986:3). However, these things also contain especial social potential (Appadurai 1986: 7). Bringing forth a social conceptualisation of a consumption practice shall enable a certain perspective of consumption. This perspective sees consumption not as the act of using up goods and services, but makes way for a study of consumption as a meaningful construction of things and ideas. A consumption practice, which facilitates the development of meaning, is one that makes consumption “the acquisition and use of things” (Wilhite 2006:7).

Looking closer at purchase and ownership of vacation properties in Brazil, it would contribute to an understanding of a practice that could not be explained in universal terms of demand and desire. Rather, putting aside assumptions of economical rationality<sup>10</sup>, it is possible to comprehend how consumption is not simply an isolated activity that happens in the “end use”. As Liechty points out, whereas Marxist-oriented approaches to consumption have been

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<sup>10</sup> Economics has traditionally used the term rationality to explain consumers’ behavior. See amongst others; Boudon *The logic of social action* (1989)

concerned with the acts leading up to purchase, the approaches stemming from a more Weberian tradition consider consumption in relation to its social use after purchase (Liechty 2003:30, footnotes). It should be possible to take both approaches into consideration for the determination of consumption. Looking at the acts that led up to a purchase *and* the social uses of the second home after purchase can determine a specific use of the second home and reveal the establishment of meaning for the individuals involved.

Acquiring a commodity for oneself is a dynamic action that involves interplay between many different ideas and actors. Bernard and Spencer (1998) stated that the use of an object can be things, ideas or relationships, by that it seems to me that the meaningful use people make of consumption practice could just as much consist of the relationship *between* things and ideas, as these parts are not clearly separate. Where Appadurai states that goods have “social lives” (1986) and Liechty poses that “the act of buying is only one “moment” in the cultural process of consumption” (2003:30), the importance of seeing consumption as a *process* rather than a single act becomes evident. As such, when investigating second homes in Brazil, it is important to look at how it is constructed prior to, during and after purchase. In particular, how its uses are affected by ideas constructed in the acquisition of a vacation property. Without forgetting the material basis of consumption practice, it should be possible to look at the social context within which it operates.

### 1.3 Methods and Location

When I seek to describe the Norwegian construction of second homes on another continent, this will not be in terms of a strict method falling under one specific discipline. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba, methodology is indeed interwoven with and emerges from the nature of particular disciplines (Lincoln and Guba 2000:164), but that does not mean that it is not possible to include other ways of doing research. Although I have used main elements

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from the ethnographical method, a qualitative study such as the one I have conducted leaves room for an alternative use of methods.

### **1.3.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research does not belong to a certain discipline, but appears most often within the social sciences. As a research method, it is often characterized by the way in which it leaves room for an in-depth description of a certain phenomenon. What it is not, is a method that generalizes a large number of occurrences. When I seek a deeper understanding and knowledge of a certain consumption practice, applying a qualitative method seems best when conducting research, documenting data and presenting specific findings in a text. My aim has not been to prove some holistic truth about certain objective facts, but to try to say something about how a consumption practice might work in a specific context. As stated by Geertz, it is not about seeking “an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (1993: 5).

As a productive method by which to develop concepts, insights and understandings, doing qualitative research allowed me to describe patterns in the data rather than building data from preconceived hypotheses. The qualitative study may thus be conceived of as inductive in its form (Taylor and Bogdan 1998:7). Even if pure induction is impossible, as we are often shaped by our assumptions, it would still be productive to strive towards entering a field with an “empty mind”. Lofland and Lofland (1995) claim that this way of building knowledge and data is a process that is creative and intuitive, thereby confirming the nature of my research; allowing for a creative selection of methods. Rather than following standardized procedures of inquiry, the project was intuitively directed by the data. When an ethnographic method allows a researcher to stay close to the empirical world, this was the main method of qualitative research that I employed. My aim was to study “people

in the context of their pasts and the situations that they find themselves” (Taylor and Bogdan 1998:8). In that, the ethnographic method provided the best study of people in that context.

Stewart claims that ethnography is not comparable to other qualitative methods, and points to five characteristics that separate this form of research from others (1998:5ff)<sup>11</sup>. Participant observation, being one of them, was used as a method when conducting fieldwork. Here, the ethnographer’s own inquiry experience with the actors in the field should be included as a part of the ethnographic description. The need for explication to be contextualized is another trait of ethnography: “ethnographers explain one set of observations in terms of connections with others, and with concepts used for their fit with the context” (Stewart 1998:7). In so doing, I was able to develop a more thorough understanding of a locally evolved social life in the context of a second home. This allowed me to develop a meaningful comparison between what was expressed and found during a pre-study and how things were actually shown to function in a context-related setting. Steinar Kvale postulates that it is participant observation and field studies of actual behaviour, combined with informal interviews that would give the most valid result (2006:61). Accordingly, these were the main components in my research, which was initiated by a pre-study

### *Conducting a Pre-Study*

Making use of a qualitative study is said to constitute an advantage when that which is being studied is relatively unknown or of an uncertain character (Jacobsen 2005, Creswell 1994). When I first became interested in the subject at hand, I did not have much knowledge about what I was about to study, and thus it became clear that I had to avail myself of different methods in order to

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<sup>11</sup> That is: 1) participant observation, 2) holism, 3) context sensitivity, 4) socio-cultural description and 5) theoretical connections to anthropological theory.

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gain that knowledge. Having been advised to conduct a pre-study in the initial phase of my study, I found it to be an excellent way to incorporate myself in the practice of having second homes.

The period during which this pre-study was done, a couple of months, was crucial to seeing how actors could be influenced prior to and during an acquisition phase. I followed the Norwegian media's various interests in the subject, attended various conventions dealing with vacation property abroad, and sat in on their seminars about purchase. In addition, I made contacts with several individuals involved in ownership of vacation properties abroad - buyers, owners and sellers. This pre-study was organized more or less as a field study and was of much help to me in the later fieldwork, as I made a lot of acquaintances in different social networks<sup>12</sup>, of which I made much use once I had gone to Brazil. Establishing contact with the actors involved in such a practice, both through real-estate agencies and with the "average Joe" was important in order for me to avail myself of their knowledge and experience when gaining a certain picture of what it was all about.

### *Open, Conversational Interviews*

Towards the end of this pre-study, I had made contacts so as to prepare for interviews with second home owners with a diverse range in ownership; from those who had just recently purchased, to those having visited their vacation home only once, to those with an ownership that had lasted a couple of years. The structure of the interviews was conversational in its form, implying that a clear structure was cast aside for a loosely defined framework. Conversations as a way to extract data were used as a form of interviewing both in pre-study and during fieldwork. By an open conversational interview I mean that it had a fluent dialogue form that was not interrupted by specific sets of questions.

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<sup>12</sup> Mostly those involved in some way with ownership of vacation properties.

Using this form of interview allowed for variation in dialogue according to the interests, experience and views of the second home owners.

Different ways of conducting interviews can be seen related both to goal and content of a project, in addition to which mode of inquiry to be found appropriate. A conversational interview implied, in my case, an explicit focus on a selected theme: second home ownership in Brazil. This would prompt the interviewee to do the talking, while I followed up on points being made throughout the conversation. This manner of conducting interviews is described by Valentine as “sensitive and people-oriented” (1997:111) due to the fact that by letting the interviewees speak, they were allowed to “construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words” (Valentine 1997:111). To use this mode of interview was important in order for me to be able to understand the owners’ experiences prior to scientific explanation (Kvale 1996:1).

I met with one of the owners after appointment. Talking to both male and female owners, it was often the one who had been most involved in the ownership that took time out of their busy lives to meet me for a couple of hours. A café was a typical place for an interview, but I would also conduct interviews in my informants’ homes or at their workplace. I found that quiet cafés were usually a good option - being a neutral place both for my informants and myself, it served the purpose of maintaining a relaxed environment in which the informants seemed to be comfortable.

Consequently, the interview would take an informal tone and would proceed in the manner of a conversation, with the intention of research. The conversations were taped by permission, as this did not appear to be a distraction. Touching upon subjects of social and cultural importance during the conversational interviews, I found there to be many subjects to investigate more thoroughly in the second home context. These interviews in the pre-study provided me with an understanding of the practice of acquiring and

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owning a second home in Brazil, and they would come to be highly useful to me during my fieldwork in Brazil.

### *Fieldwork*

When ethnography's main characteristic is participant observation, it entails "the up-close involvement of the researcher in some form of participative role" (Stewart 1998:6). In that sense it seemed necessary to include fieldwork as an important contribution to the extraction of valid data. Interviews conducted during the pre-study gave a rather simplistic "presentation of the self" (Goffman 1971) when it allowed the interviewees to limit the picture given of themselves. Building on a role that Goffman describes as belonging to a frontstage<sup>13</sup> (1971), relying on interviews alone would minimize the understanding of how action took form in the second home setting. When a pre-study as this could only allow a specific presentation of self, controlling the impression that is given, it would not be a sufficient way in which to gain valid data on the interplay of meanings and action.

The most extensive extraction of meaning can be said to occur through fieldwork. While interviews and more formal conversations constituted the bulk of my activity in Norway - with the intention of deriving a conceptual framework - my fieldwork in Brazil also set forth an observational activity. Observing people in their everyday settings, in the context of their second home, listening to their conversations and participating in their actions, allowed closeness to an empirical world. Meaning was in such a way revealed through participant observation, and as I used an open interview form in combination with everyday conversation, meaning could be determined according to the observable action. Conducting fieldwork in the second home context was therefore important in order for me to compare a presentation of

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<sup>13</sup> Frontstage and backstage are terms in use by Goffman (1971) to draw an analogy to the way one may put up mask in front of a crowd and how that mask may be tossed aside once going backstage and being able to relax.

self with the actual presence in the second home context. It further allowed me to take a closer look at some of the issues that were revealed during the pre-study.

Even though the time spent in the field only lasted for six weeks it appeared to be just about enough time to gain significant and valid data. Knowing that it may limit the depth of my observational activity, it still worked well in looking into the practice of having second homes, in its context. Because the second home setting also figured as a vacation setting, the number of Norwegian owners present at any one time in their second homes varied. I realized that I had to centre my fieldwork around school vacations, as I was told that it would be the best time for me to meet owners in the areas to which I was travelling. Since the closest in time was the winter vacation, I decided to centre my fieldwork on that period. Additionally, I arrived during the carnival season, knowing that it would attract Norwegians to their second homes in Brazil. I had made plans to stay at certain condominiums as it was crucial that I lived in the condominiums where Norwegian second home owners were located in order to conduct a participant observation. Making arrangements and planning ahead made the fieldwork very productive.

### *Informants*

When selecting informants, it was first of all important to find someone willing to share their thoughts and experiences about owning a second home. My criteria were, firstly, that the people I interviewed were second home owners with a property in Brazil, either for a long period of time or having recently become owners. During the pre-study I made use of my own social networks and the contacts I made within real-estate agencies in order to reach those who owned such property. Frequent use of e-mail and telephone supplied the contacts reached at conventions and in seminars. I did not decide upon a specific number of interviews in this initial phase, but decided that I would do as many as I could before commencing with the fieldwork. During



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my fieldwork in Brazil, I met with a rather random selection of informants. I would often use those who owned and vacationed in the condominiums in which I myself was staying. These were the ones with which I had the best opportunities to interact, and with which to indulge in active observation. The fact that I stayed at three different condominiums made my selection of informants varied and representative. In addition, I conducted interviews and had conversations with Norwegian second home owners at other condominiums. Note that all of my informants that are mentioned in this thesis have been given different names, as they were promised anonymity.

### *Collecting and Processing Data*

This study is based upon fifteen taped interviews and fourteen noted ones, in addition to informal conversations and participant observations with numerous individuals. During my fieldwork, I kept a journal in which I collected all my notes on participant observation; things that had happened during the day, and conversations that had been made. It also made room for my own thoughts and reflections as a researcher, being a part of my informants' everyday lives.

When conducting interviews using a tape recorder, I would transcribe them as soon as possible after the interview, and when conducting interviews in writing, these were typed out where quotes were emphasized. After having collected all the data, I would arrange the interviews and work them through numerous times in order to see what was of particular importance, and to evaluate how this might be presented.

### *My Role as a Native Researcher*

Combining participant observation with conversation allowed me to take part in my informants' sharing of thoughts and perspectives. This provided first hand data of a social and material world that I will present in this thesis. However, being a Norwegian and studying Norwegian second home owners might impose some issues with my role as a native researcher. "Qualitative

researchers must attempt to suspend, or set aside, their own perspectives and taken-for-granted views of the world”, Taylor and Bogdan says (Taylor and Bogdan 1998:7). If this is difficult for researchers in general, then it might be especially difficult for a native researcher. Being aware of such perils when conducting research into my own society, I found myself informed about what to expect through various anthropological readings<sup>14</sup>. My role and given character as a native researcher could therefore work to my advantage, as I was able to draw upon knowledge stemming from my familiarity with a Norwegian way of life. Being a researcher into myself made me conscious about my own cultural categories, something of which I had been made aware by Wadel (1991:59). This awareness provided me with a reflection on them as being mine, and not necessarily my informants even though belonging to the same society. Trying as best as I could to divest myself of my “cultural spectacles”, I found that it mostly worked to my advantage, giving the limited time I had to conduct fieldwork.

In gaining confidence and negotiating my role in the fieldwork context, this turned out to be an advantage, as it allowed me to participate and be included in a Norwegian community almost immediately. Travelling alone also worked in my favour, as it seemed only natural that I should take part in their social life, as I had no one else to be with. The fact that I was actually interested in *them*, and initiated social contact on an active scale, appeared to be a highly welcoming act. The explicit focus upon being a Norwegian, which will become evident later in the thesis, eased my transition into an unknown environment in the condominiums. Being accepted in the second home context mainly had something to do with the fact that I was “one of them” and therefore included in a Norwegian community. Secondly, speaking the same language and having familiarity with their cultural communion known from

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<sup>14</sup> See among others: Wadel (1991), Longva (2001), Hastrup (1991) and Eriksen (1998)

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home seemed to make it easier for the Norwegian second home owners to relate to me.

### 1.3.2 Brazil and the Location

#### *Brazil and Natal*

Located in South America, Brazil borders to ten South American countries and is by far the largest of them. It is a federal republic that has passed through three centuries under Portuguese rule, becoming an independent nation in 1822 and a republic in 1889. With Brazil's population of more than 190 million people and spanning 8 million square kilometres, a country like Norway with its population of 4.6 million spread over 307 thousand square kilometres is dwarfed in comparison<sup>15</sup>. Brazil's official language is Portuguese, and as a part of my preparation for fieldwork I attended a six week course in order to be able to communicate with a local community and cross-check some of the information I got from the Norwegian second home owners in Brazil<sup>16</sup>.

The choice of location in Brazil fell upon Natal. The capital of the state Rio Grande do Norte, in the easternmost part of Brazil, is a holiday destination for many Norwegians. In addition, many have purchased property both in the city centre and on its outskirts. It houses 2 million people, and various estimates claim that around 500 thousand tourists visit the city every year. Travels to Natal are done by air. The last few years' extensive travel to Brazil has resulted in several chartered planes from Norway offering a "direct"<sup>17</sup> flight to

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<sup>15</sup> Information of Brazil by "the world fact book" presented online by Central Intelligence Agency: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html#Intro> (27.09.07)

<sup>16</sup> As I speak some Spanish, and Portuguese in many ways resemble Spanish, it was not improbable to become familiar with the language in six weeks.

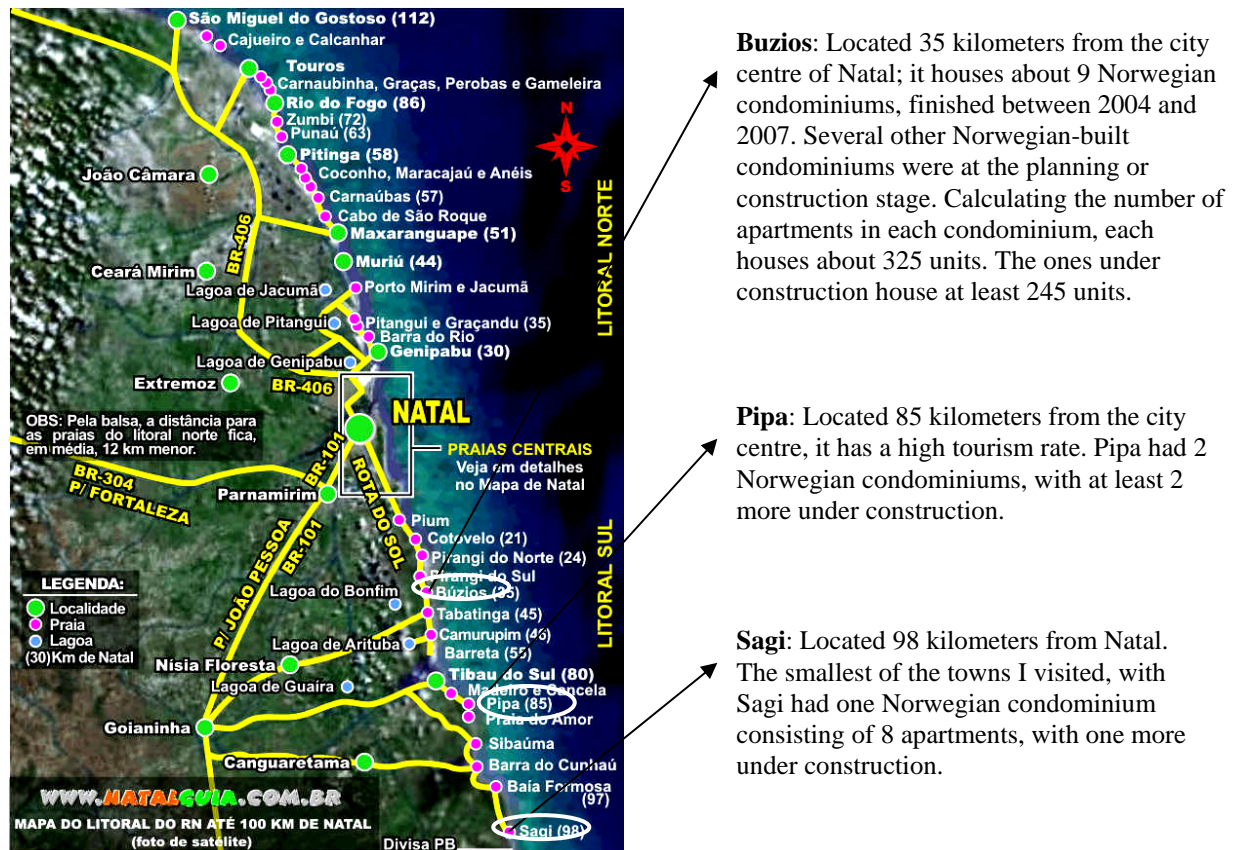
<sup>17</sup> "Direct", because the plane stops along the way, to collect food, beverages and fuel.

Fortaleza and Natal. The duration of the flight is thirteen hours or more, depending on the flight route selected. Natal, as a municipal unit, has been the uttermost focus-point for Norwegian property investment. Concentrating on the outskirts of Natal, Buzios, Pipa and Sagi were the locations I chose to carry out my study. The fact that I centred my research on the areas around Natal derived from my decision to conduct a study around family based condominiums, and these were located outside the city centre. I wanted to see how second *homes* were constructed, and for this purpose I would need to speak to owners that were actually using their vacation property<sup>18</sup>. Based on the interviews I did in Norway, it became evident that most of my informants owned such property in specific parts of Brazil, and it was also against this background that I made my choice of location.

Buzios and Pipa are places of different size and number of inhabitants. There are relatively few residents or at least locals, but the numbers of vacationers are even higher. In Buzios<sup>19</sup>, the number of residents increases during the summer months, making the inhabitants in the surrounding area of the Norwegian condominiums mostly tourists and foreigners. Much the same goes for Pipa, where the number of locals is estimated at approximately 2000, similarly consisting of residents of foreign nationality. As the living expenses are considerable in these areas, most of the locals not depending on tourists have moved out of the district, leaving former fishermen to trade away their properties and convert to other ways of life further inland. Sagi, on the other hand, with one Norwegian condominium, is a local community not completely dependent on tourism. Out of about 600 inhabitants, only a few are still fishermen, and increasingly more live off of the daily tourism, in the restaurants and on the beaches.

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<sup>18</sup> As opposed to those which were actually used through shared ownership, which mostly rented the property out.



**Figure 1: Map of Natal and its outskirts, concentrating on the beach destinations for tourism (www.natalguia.com.br)**

## Condominiums

*Condominium* is a word borrowed from the Portuguese language (*condomínio*) but is also used in English. It is a term I use to refer to a complex of apartment buildings or houses, separated from others by a surrounding brick wall. It was often termed by my informants as an *anlegg*. The inhabitants share the expenses of maintaining a condominium through security, such as a guarded gate, and generally employ a full time working janitor and a gardener. During my six weeks of fieldwork in Brazil, my time was divided between a “visningstur” and three different condominiums:

<sup>19</sup> When I refer to Buzios, it is actually the area around Buzios beach that are of relevance. This was the area that most Norwegian condominiums were located.

**“Buzios Tropical”**

A fairly large condominium, consisting of 40 apartments placed in close proximity to the Buzios beach. Seeing as Buzios houses so many Norwegian condominiums, this condominium had many advantages besides being the place where many of my informants from the pre-study owned an apartment. Its size worked in its favour, being not too small, as it had many owners present at various times, and not too big, seeing as the owners had become attached to one another. Constructed in 2005, it was one of the “veterans” in the area - only one of the other Norwegian condominiums was older.

Consequently, the owners at Buzios Tropical had some experience with their second home. One of its other advantages that worked particularly well in my favour was the placement of a restaurant inside the condominium, which attracted other second home owners in the area. My main participant observation was done in Buzios Tropical, as I stayed here the longest and developed good relations with the owners. During the stay, I was able to take part in the daily life of a Norwegian condominium, accompanying families who shared their stories and thoughts during several meaningful conversations. Here, I got to take a closer look at what part the motivations presented in the pre-study played in the second home context.

**“Colina dos Noruegueses”**

Placed in Pipa, “Colina dos Noruegueses” had been described as a Norwegian cottage settlement (*hytteby*) by the builders and by the media. With its 11 units, it does not consist of apartments, but of houses that vary in size. Located on a hill, thereby the word “colina”, this “Norwegian hill” was about a five minutes’ walk away from the tourist centre of Pipa. While present at the Colina, I wanted to take a closer look at how these second homes worked in comparison to cottage settlements in Norway. The houses had been constructed within a time frame of seven years. While I was there, about three families were present in their houses, making it possible to conduct some interviews along with participant observation. This stay nuanced my picture

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towards the comparison of second homes in Brazil and cottage settlements in Norway.

### **“Sagi Panorama”**

The smallest condominium I went to, Sagi Panorama, had only eight apartments. During my stay there, I followed a family close during the first visit to their second home, looking into their expectations and experiences with their new property. Seeing as Sagi is a village not so fully dependent on tourism and second home owners, I got a more thorough understanding of the coexistence between locals and the owners that did not seem to differ much from the other places I went to. As in the other condominiums, I had borrowed an apartment in which to stay, which allowed me to get closer to the second home owners and participate in their activities.

## **1.4 Structure of Contents**

The thesis “Close by Distance” is divided into seven chapters with the purpose of presenting an understanding of Norwegian second home settlement in Natal, Brazil. This has chiefly been done in three steps that meet a practical and analytical purpose. It builds from an approximate start of a purchase which I found in the beginning of my research, to a meaningful construction of ownership of the second home, relating to what I found during fieldwork. The analytic focus in the structure of the thesis proposes how a vacation property may change through its uses, and in this way become a second home for the owners. Chapter 1, as an introduction, was used to introduce concepts, delineate motives and focus the study through methods and fields. Building upon notions such as *acquisition* and *use* in terms of consumption, the thesis is further organized so as to meet this framework for investigating the establishment of second homes.

Concentrated around ideas that constructed Brazil as a dream location, Chapter 2 details the motivations second home owners had for second home purchase. Chapter 3, however, shows how such ideas do not figure alone in the decision making, in the sense that different social channels actively participated in the acquisition phase. These two chapters function as a background for a later look at how ideas and the use of mediators effected the use of the second home. In seeing how second homes actually came into being, the subsequent chapters, 4, 5 and 6, indicate how the use of vacation properties appears in light of known and unknown factors. How a second home was established and in fact became a second *home* is dealt with in Chapter 4. Here, the second home settlement is compared to particular traits in the establishment of Norwegian cottage communities. This should make it possible to see how familiar elements can be brought along to another continent. It also indicates how that may contribute to a feeling of comfort when in relation to something known. This is not only represented through the familiarity of establishing homes, but also relates to the familiarity of belonging to a specific nationality.

Nationality is further important when looking into how the second home owner relates to his/her surroundings, in Chapter 5. Here it will be revealed how certain manner of interaction was conducted first and foremost through a Norwegian community that seemed to put restraints upon the relation to those outside such a community. Seeking out the safe within an unknown realm is an issue strongly emphasized in these three chapters, and it is further stressed in Chapter 6. This chapter functions more or less as an assembly of key points from the previous chapters, as it points out the most salient characteristics of a Norwegian second home construction in Brazil. It furthermore shows how the use of a second home is about keeping the known close and the unknown at a distance. Finally, Chapter 7 is what concludes the thesis.



## **2. Dream Homes in Brazil**

When I began conducting the research for this thesis, I believed that my future informants would be people with some or a great deal of knowledge and an intimate relationship to Brazil, with its culture and environment, prior to purchasing a vacation property. These assumptions were mainly founded on the belief that by purchasing a vacation property in a country such a great geographical distance away from Norway, the buyer had made a choice in relation to his/her previous experience with that country. However, I was surprised to learn that only a couple of my informants had any prior familiarity with the country. Most of them had not seen the surroundings of their newly purchased vacation home, let alone visited the country. Knowing that, what motivated such purchases when the second home owners did not act upon prior experiences? This chapter shall deal with the motivations, intentions and ideas behind my informants' choice of purchase vacation properties in Brazil.

### **2.1 Motivations of Second Home Ownership**

There are obviously many different reasons behind the choice to purchase a vacation property in Brazil. While some state that it is all about having a place to spend their vacation in a hot climate, others decide on the basis of pure economic investment. Although I will not try to dispute either of these claims, I will present a nuanced picture of what the individuals themselves see as the main reasons for purchase. As most of my informants did not have any personal relationship to Brazil or even knew much about the country, it seems legitimate to inquire about their decision to purchase a vacation home there.

### 2.1.1 Brazil as the Exotic Location

““Paradise for a Northerner”, “Fulfil your holiday- and leisure dreams””<sup>20</sup>.

These lines, taken from an advertisement, are representative of how vacation properties in Brazil have been presented to many Norwegians. They play on the assumption that there is a universal ideal present in the minds of people inhabiting the northern hemisphere, in need of realization. The way in which vacation properties are portrayed in advertisements, in the media and by real estate agencies, all seem to have the same characteristics, namely that the vacation property put up for sale or promoted is something out of the ordinary, something more than just another vacation property. Advertisements such as these speak to an anonymous mass of consumers, and resemble by that the more traditional economic analysis of consumption. While I doubt the pre-assumption that this is an idea with universal applicability, it seems that these illustrations of dream homes in Brazil are often one of the first meetings many individuals have with the concept of second homes in Brazil.

Conventions such as *Bolig i utlandet* at Oslo Kongressenter presented an image close to that which greets individuals in advertisements and articles. Huge posters displaying illustrations of nature and presenting picturesque images of the surroundings that enclose the different vacation properties, with headlines such as “Brazil – a paradise you simply have to experience!”<sup>21</sup>, invites an image of a second home in other environments than those experienced at home. This adds an adventurous dimension to the consumption practice, while playing on a notion of the exotic. Advertisements posted and articles written about Norwegians living out their ultimate dream in Brazil seemed to have had an effect on several of my informants. Some explained

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<sup>20</sup> These quotes have been taken from the advertisement brochure of the real estate agency RTR’s resort in Tabatinga called “Sol do Atlantico”, obtained in February 2007. My translation in English.

<sup>21</sup> This quote has been taken from the advertisement brochure of the sales agency Brasilboliger.no and their condominium “Conde de Braganca”, obtained in March 2007. My translation in English.

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how reading these stories had started their thoughts towards purchasing a vacation property in Brazil. One informant, a middle aged man, had read in the newspaper about how several Norwegians lived “the good life” at a specific spot in Brazil. Once he had finished reading the article, he contacted a real estate company, and a few weeks later he purchased an apartment in that exact compound. When I met him in Brazil three years later, many of the people mentioned in the article had sold their apartments, while he and his family still owned theirs.

The wish to take part in an exotic paradise had led many of my informants to finally purchase a vacation property in Brazil. One of the informants, Lise, said that this was the very reason why her family chose Brazil over a country geographically closer to home. She claimed that from what they had read and heard, in addition to a few experiences with the place itself, a country like Spain was not what they wished for. It did not square with their ideas of what the location of their dream home should look like. On the other hand, even though they had never been to Brazil, the things they had read and seen were enough to ensure them that Brazil was the right choice. This is not an isolated example. By choosing to buy their bungalow unseen, without much knowledge of Brazil and how the vacation property itself would be, Lise and her family did as many of my other informants had done: “thrown themselves into exotic adventurous residences a long way from Norway”<sup>22</sup>.

### **2.1.2 An Adventurous Vacation**

Simply put, purchasing vacation properties in Brazil could be all about different ways to spend a vacation. The possibility of having a constant place to return to that accommodated their own vacation property was certainly a perspective that figured often when asked for reasons of such a purchase.

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<sup>22</sup> Taken from a Norwegian article in Sunnmørsposten 11.12.2006. My translation in English.

When there are so many places to choose from when purchasing a vacation property outside the country, the choice of Brazil is in itself interesting. I have already pointed to the images of exoticism that had made Lise and her family choose Brazil. This had been based on a feeling that other countries, such as Spain, did not live up to their idea of how the location of their vacation property should be. Ideas of other traditional vacation spots play an important part in the individual descriptions, as it could seem to represent a type of tourism that my informants wished to distance themselves from.

### *The Anti-Chartered Vacation*

“Syden” is a Norwegian term to which I believe most Norwegians have a relationship, in one way or another, and is used both by those who travel there and those who do not. It was most certainly a term about which nearly all of my informants had a comprehensive idea. Generally speaking, “Syden”<sup>23</sup> is a collective term for those places where most package tourists gather in search of sun, bathing and a nice, non-reflective holiday. Runar Døving describes “Syden”, using Marc Agué’s term of a non-place (*non-lieux*), as a place without history or identification, a place that allows for transit, consumption or dreams (1993:1). By revealing how certain ideas of “Syden” functioned for my informants, it will be possible to see why Brazil was chosen over a number of other locations.

Silje, a Norwegian girl in her late twenties, was one of those who explained her choice of Brazil as an escape from the drawbacks that vacations in “Syden” offered. She was the first to introduce a wish for an experience that could provide something more adventurous than an average holiday could. Being one of the few who had previously visited Brazil, she had purchased the vacation property mainly because, as she claimed, she had “fallen totally in

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<sup>23</sup> To define the term is not a task I will endure here as simply functions as a background in which to base the description of a Brazilian vacation property upon.

love with the country”. Still, she was very clear about her perception of “Syden”, and as to why she would never purchase an apartment there:

There is something about that tourist-thing that I can’t cope with any longer. [...] Strolling around with people that speak Norwegian and Swedish and Danish and English all day long, [...] It’s not interesting, it’s no fun. [...] I don’t go to the Canaries on vacation anymore. I don’t, lie around on the beach for a week. If I want adventures, I don’t bother to do that.<sup>a</sup>

Spain, and in particular the Canaries, could be seen as the cradle itself for the understanding of “Syden” as a concept. This is where the typical tourist would travel on a holiday. My informants were not directly opposed to seeing themselves as tourists *per se*, but they did not refer to themselves as tourists either. Instead, they stressed the fact that they were first and foremost guests in another man’s country; a guest with a more permanent relationship to the holiday destination operating through the second home.

Døving points to a distinction relevant to this case. He sees the charter tourist as being satisfied with a vacation that provides delight and relaxation, as opposed to an anti-tourist that travels with other motives (1993:11). The activities of a traditional tourist do not appear to be interesting enough for many of the second home owners. As Silje points out in the outline of her relationship to “Syden”, the activities connected to “Syden” were no fun. This was something she had used to do in the past, but it did not provide her with anything. The fun was placed in activities that provided adventure and experience, rather than lying around on a beach, talking to the same kind of people that she talk to at home, not doing much out of the ordinary.

The typical holiday tourist that spent leisure time in “Syden” was not looked up to by my informants. Most of them were very explicit about demonstrating a distance to the vacationers and the second home establishments in “Syden” and more particularly the south of Spain. This was done both during interviews and conversations, as well as in general interactions with myself and others. When informants would term special parts of Spain as “Syden”,

they were implying a form of tourist machinery that most of them had deliberately tried to avoid. One of my informants told me about his many trips to Cuba, where he and his friends would flee the beaches or any other place whenever buses with the typical tourists would stop by. He described his experience as a sequence of events where a crowd of people would pile up in front of different buses, set out to take as many photographs as possible, following a tour guide who would eventually coach them back onto the bus and drive away, all framed as happening within matter of minutes. When he had finished the story, there was no doubt as to how felt about such tourists. He referred to himself as an anti-charter person.

This reinforced the idea of a type of meaninglessness believed to represent the vacations spent in “Syden”. It goes to show that it might not always be specific geographical areas *per se* that bear these negative connotations, but often the activities or rather the lack of meaningful activities associated with this typical tourism. Døving postulates that “Syden” is a cultural and mental-geographical place embedded in the tourists’ own ideas of specific places, than the geographically delimited area (1993:6ff). Even though different places in Brazil could function more or less as a tourist magnet on their own, few of the individuals I talked imagined Brazil as a type of “Syden”. Thus, it is possible to identify a vision of Brazil as something out of the ordinary, offering an adventurous vacation that “Syden” cannot provide.

### *A Distinctive Feature*

The idea of Brazil as a paradise and a dream seemed to be an assumption that could be satisfied by acquiring a vacation property there. As an escape from everyday life, it may grant a way to meet with the exoticism of a different culture and a different life. While “Syden” is considered to be void of local culture, with tourists making up its inhabitants (Døving 1993:8), Brazil provides buyers with a possibility to live in close contact with a local community. Being a different experience than lying on the beach creating

fleeting relations to other Scandinavians, getting to know another culture was a great motivation in the purchase of vacation properties in Brazil. Seeking to establish contact with a local community would therefore be what distanced purchases of vacation properties in Brazil from those in the locations assumed to be “Syden”.

Lars, a young owner of an apartment in a Norwegian condominium in Sagi, talked about his expectations of ownership in the following matter: “I would rather that it has more of distinctiveness, the possibility to blend in with how the rest of the community actually lives”. Anticipating spending his vacation in his own vacation property, in co-existence with a local community, added a distinctive feature to the creation of dream homes in Brazil, for Lars and for many of my informants. As an experience, this was not something that the large tourist complexes of “Syden” could provide. Being able to learn something from the local community and thereby gaining an exclusive knowledge also formed the distinctive feature that Lars was looking for. This was strongly emphasized by informants in their stories of motivations for purchase in Brazil.

### **2.1.3 Escaping Everyday Life in Norway**

There’s something about the exotic that causes that when you first go away you travel far, to something that is different, something other than what we have at home. That the cultural differences enable a feeling of experiencing something other than what you’re used to at home. That too is an important part of the deal. That you’re actually dealing with differences.<sup>b</sup>

What Ole-Petter describes here, as his main reason for buying a vacation property in Brazil, could be applied as a primary tendency apparent in many of my informants’ descriptions. What it seemed to boil down to in the uttered wish to experience something meaningful was for many the craving to escape everyday life in Norway. This had to do both with escaping what everyday life in Norway consisted of, as well as escaping the typical Norwegian tourist, as considered in the above section of “Syden”. The key word here seems to be

*difference*. The location of vacation property had to be some place categorically and geographically *different* than the recognizable first home. When craving a feeling of a different experience, it did not seem to matter how many hours the owners had to travel in order to visit that second home.

Wanting to spend some time away from home in order to gain privacy was what Tor, a middle aged man, argued as one of his reasons for the purchase of a vacation property in Brazil. For Tor, this was something that generated a difference between the perceived “Syden” and Brazil, as it seemed to resemble too much of home. The motivation to purchase a vacation property in Brazil did not only have to be about adventures, but it had to be something completely different than what was experienced at home. Not meeting neighbours from home presented the opportunity to tell stories about such adventures when returning. This could further contribute to a feeling of experiencing something unique. Tor mentioned to me about the benefit of contact with a local community, being that “it could provide us with a richer profit from the vacation”.

#### **2.1.4 Learning Through Local Contact**

Learning and gaining knowledge from contacts with a local community seemed to be a highly appreciated element for my informants. A learning outcome in this regard focused on the ability for individuals to see ones own life in a new light when faced with how other people lived. The expected experience was viewed as something different than travelling on a regular holiday as the typical tourist. Lise described a wish she had had for her son to experience something out of the ordinary that could contribute an element of learning for him, through direct contact with other ways of life. To be able to see how the locals live, she pointed to the importance of not staying within the four walls of the apartment complex, where it was simply the well-known Norwegian lifestyle that was observable. She wanted her son, Kristian, to



experience the culture of Brazil that was not possible to experience when staying inside the condominium. When I asked her about why this was so important to her, she explained it in the following manner:

Because it is something with the fact that Brazil is a poor country, and we want to experience some of the Brazilian. We're not here just to sit with Norwegians [...] it is important that Kristian get to experience the Brazilian people [...] gain a knowledge of how people are doing down here. 'Cause he won't hurt by knowing and seeing that there are a lot of poor kids here [...] and I think it is important that he grows upon that and gain an understanding for how some people are doing.<sup>c</sup>

Since it was important for Lise that her son Kristian experience the local culture, activities were intentionally built in order for him to gain certain knowledge of another way of life. She wanted to provide him with a cultural education by letting him experience something besides the ordinary tourist context. In that way, she believed that he would be able to grow on that knowledge as a human being. Meeting kids of the same age, without the opportunities that he had been given, would hopefully make him appreciate things more in his everyday life. Using that as a source of education, Lise believed that she could provide him with a comprehension and sympathy for other ways of life. This was all a part of many of the owners I talked with called “gaining perspective” or “changing perspective”.

Being able to see how a Brazilian community lived without a lot of the basic elements that we as Norwegians depend upon, was an important element of change for Fredrik, a man I interviewed during the pre-study. It had made him change his outlook on life when returning from his apartment in Brazil. To gain a different perspective of life, he said, was one of the things that they had talked a lot about when in Brazil. To him, the apartment he had purchased in Brazil was originally intended as an economic investment, but that changed once he encountered the local community in Sagi. He explained how his experience with life in Brazil had provoked something resembling a shock when he realized that he had to adjust his high level of activity and change his behaviour in order to approach the society in Sagi. Described by some of his

friends as a man who placed material objects fairly high<sup>24</sup>, he had undergone a change of perspective in Brazil. He became aware of this when he opened the door to his new, highly equipped and furnished home in Norway and realized that he had to think through his priorities in life and ask if they were primarily materially based. Thus, he came to see his life in Norway in a new light. As Silje described:

[W]e could perhaps learn even more from them in appreciating life. [...] It's so good for us. Seeing how other people are doing. [...] I don't know if I do any less of the things I did before, it's just that you get another mode of thinking perhaps and that's good. That you actually don't ignore it. But you have to take some of the reflections back home.<sup>d</sup>

Silje was under the impression that purchasing vacation property in Brazil could make a difference in the everyday lives of the second home owners. To appreciate and learn from other ways of life in this manner may provide the individual with a change of perspective that could further influence their everyday life in Norway. For Silje, Lise and Fredrik, and many of the other second home owners, it was as a learning process that was believed to spur a change, if not by particular actions then at least in their mindsets.

As a motivation for second home ownership in a country so far away, the idea that it is possible to learn from other ways of life has contributed to establishing Brazil as a special location for a second home. Fredrik pointed to an important lesson to learn, but nonetheless postulated that it did not come with a wish to permanently reside in Sagi. His change in experiencing everyday life there was something that provided a new perspective for him, and which he saw to be of relevance when brought home to Norway. That was also what separated the ownership in Brazil from those in e.g. European countries. Being able to gain a certain outcome by purchasing and, furthermore, visiting the second home was therefore not only about escaping

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<sup>24</sup> I talked to two of his friends before and after his interview, both of whom commented on his change of mind after the Brazil visit, having both described him as a materialistic person.

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everyday life and the typical tourism of “Syden”. It was also about the benefits a vacation property might have when it contributes to change; change in own mindset and in the arrangements of their everyday life.

### **2.1.5 Long-Term Perspectives and The Elusive Category of Investment**

The term *investment* is mostly used with reference to an economic transaction believed to provide the investor with a specific economic profit. This is also true in the economic transactions of vacation properties in Brazil, and certainly different instances of media and marketing have been keen on presenting it in this matter. Investment seemed to have diverse meanings for my informants - most of them paying no mind to economic reasoning. For several of the people I talked to, an investment, rather than producing a profit from a betterment of one's financial situation, could help to enhance their qualities of living, such as their well-being. When I discussed the element of investment and long-term perspectives with one of my informants, he stated: “I think it is in a way an investment in other qualities than money. It is an investment in well-being, for instance”. As this informant introduced his idea of investment to me, it seemed to convey an aspect of welfare. Thereby, a growing “profit” that could come from investing in a vacation property helped to add to the idea of a dream home.

#### ***The Retirement Age***

An important characteristic of second home procurement was a long-term perspective present in the form of an upcoming retirement age for most of the owners with whom I spoke. Keeping in mind the increased leisure time promised by retirement, it seemed as though it was important for many to make a plan for the future. Any supposed investment in welfare connected to ownership of vacation property seemed to be related significantly to the

owners' future existence as a pensioner. Here, a long-term perspective was introduced in the hope of a prosperous future.

While planning for the retirement age, it was important to become familiar with the place where they wished to spend their spare time as a pensioner. The short visits to the second home were for many about ridding themselves of intimidations with such a settlement before the time came. My primary informant, Lise, and her husband Johannes, would often speak about the importance of becoming familiar with the location of their vacation property before reaching the age of retirement. Planning for their part-time life in Brazil during the Norwegian winter was important for them, as they imagined that it would be hard and also a bit frightening to set about establishing a second home in an unknown territory at an old age. Petter, a man soon to be a pensioner, who had owned his second home for a couple of years, expressed the same sentiments as Lise and Johannes when he presented important points in planning for his own future, by purchasing vacation property outside his own country. To him, it was crucial to get familiar with Brazil and the town of Pipa, but just as important was building relations to other people. In Petter's own words:

I recommend everyone who gets close not to wait until they become pensioners, but start preferably a few years before they become pensioners. In that way you can build some relations and such that are important. That thing about starting once you become a pensioner is that you never end up doing it. You should start in good time, you have to practice. [...] If you're suddenly sixty, sixty-two years then you're suddenly unsure of most things.<sup>e</sup>

Planning for a future by spending time at a particular location in order to get to know another "environment" is naturally something one can imagine that the older generation would consider. However, some of my younger informants also pointed to the fact that in a long-term perspective, getting to know the place where they could imagine spending their retirement was important. Emphasizing the importance of building social relations and getting to know their neighbour, both generations referred to the feeling of safety in a seasonal

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settlement that was expected to figure in their retirement. Seeing as the retirement age lay some years ahead for most of my informants, the long-term plan for a good life was not something that would need to be put on hold. The second home owners might as well enjoy themselves and not wait for the feeling of contentment until the retirement age.

### **Concluding Remarks: The Vacation Home's Constructed Ideas**

This outline of acquisition's main characteristics concerning vacation properties in Brazil presents a picture of motives and intentions stated by the actors themselves. The conceptualization of a dream and the opportunity to experience something out of the ordinary, while at the same time enhancing the quality of living, were recurrent factors in such establishments. More important were thoughts concerning the wish to experience a perceived different culture than at home that laid the foundation of such purchases. These characteristics of a dream home seemed to make it worth the cost. Thus, the ideas associated with ownership of vacation properties appeared more relevant than the nature of the property itself. The material object was not as a whole overlooked, but rather given a specific meaning that enabled an imagination of dream homes in Brazil. These ideas portrayed Brazil as the adventurous location, and could therefore be one of the establishments that enabled many Norwegians to purchase a vacation property without acting upon prior experiences. The issues in this chapter represented some of the main ideas that allowed second homes to be established even though they were located such vast distances away from Norway. They were not, however, alone as a deciding factor upon purchase, as the next chapter will show.

### **3. Mediating Experience**

Individuals without prior knowledge would gather information concerning the outcome and choices of others (Heavner and Lochner 2002:1), thereby fusing their decisions with experience and knowledge. During my pre-study, as well as in the second home context, I found this to be representative of my informants, especially during the phase of acquisition. The mediation of experience to which I am referring here functioned as a way of communicating something that my informants lacked. This third chapter will thus focus on how other individuals, as part of a larger network, in one way or another are active in mediating experience to future second home owners. It will be shown how various social channels are active contributors to an inexperienced buyer seeking reassurance in a relatively unfamiliar practice. Being able to draw upon other people's (subjective) experience thus works as a mediation of experience, and those providing such knowledge as mediators. As such, this chapter will answer how the use of different social channels as mediators fuses existing ideas with experiences and knowledge for owners. Further, I will answer how the active use of such mediators may be a part of a quest for safety. Looking at how knowledge is being passed on, it may provide an insight into how the mediation of experience takes place.

#### **3.1 Social Networks**

Different networks made up of friends, family and acquaintances function as one social channel. In mediating experience, networks provide recommendations and knowledge about the practice of having and holding vacation properties in Brazil. Social networks, when it is seen to treat "informal and interpersonal relations in a social system" (Scott 2000:7) is a term to describe different sets of individuals who were active contributors to the communication of experience. I use "social networks" to refer to the

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organization of relationships between individuals that have in common that they own a vacation property in Brazil. Relationships that were created in the social networks I am describing were rather inter-personal and national in character, as they seemed first and foremost closely tied to Norwegians and their experiences, rather than to a global network of second home owners.

The relational concept is important in that the “relational ties (linkages) between actors are channels of transfer or “flow” of resources (either material or non-material)” (Wasserman and Faust 1994:4). With that, the social network functioned as a way for individuals to transfer non-material resources from a network of owners to potential buyers. Personal narratives worked as such a flow when those who wished to purchase a vacation property abroad listened and learned from stories that furthermore could encourage action towards purchase. Using different social networks in that way enables a participation in the exchange of stories and experiences relevant to ownership of vacation property in Brazil.

### *Consequence for Aquisition*

Several of my informants stated that they would not have purchased a vacation property in Brazil if they did not know or had not talked to someone in such a network. This someone could be a brother who had already purchased and built his house in a particular area of Brazil, or a friend who shared her outlook on owning a vacation property. A business partner or colleague, who already owned an apartment in the town in which some considered to buy a vacation property, could also provide useful hints and clues relevant to such ownership. All of them were capable of letting you know why to choose Brazil as the location for a vacation property. Lise told me what she considered to be the most important feature of this type of communication. According to her, it is all about the fact that it is crucial that someone has been there and walked the steps that she were about to walk, the point being that

she was not alone in acting on whatever ideas or thoughts she might have of a country relatively unknown to her.

Brazil, naturally enough, represents something unknown and unfamiliar to most individuals that do not have any prior experience of it. A way in which to gain knowledge about such an experience could therefore be talking to or hearing about people that already own vacation property there. The uncertainties surrounding a purchase like this are limited through the use of social networks, in that they function as a sort of risk management. Wilhite and Lutzenhiser see different forms of risk management as a hedge against an uncertain future (1999:285), and the same may be said for the use of social networks. In a wish to feel safe in an unfamiliar practice of consumption and in relation to an unknown country, it makes sense to turn to what is believed to be experienced and trustworthy sources of information. When not provided elsewhere, the social and practical experiences shared within social networks may serve as protection against the uncertainty of a purchase. Not only that, it provides information about what it is like to own a vacation property in Brazil, so that the meeting with this unknown country might not be all that intimidating. In much the same way as Heavner and Lochner (2002) describe how youth look to social networks for advice, the use of different actors in social networks functions as a channel of experience for potential buyers who are hard to locate in other arenas.

### *The Social Nature of Such Networks*

Heavner and Lochner analyze social networks and the individual decisions that are made in relation to them as an “aggregation of those decisions when individuals gather information about the outcomes and choices of (a few) others in their social network” (2002: abstract). This use of social networks is largely the same as future owners gathering of information about vacation properties in Brazil. In deciding whether or not to purchase a vacation



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property, an active use of social networks is something that most of those I spoke with had participated in.

How such social networks function could be explained by a story of how Olav and his wife decided to purchase a vacation property in Brazil. Having already established contact with his network of friends and acquaintances, he got in touch with people who had previously been involved in the process and had experience with this practice of consumption. Whenever they were about to make a decision, he would return to consult the network with which he had established contact. By “making a few calls” and “talking to some people” he became more secure in his and his wife’s choice of a specific Norwegian condominium in Brazil. The social networks he had used were not only the social network of second home owners, but also previously established networks composed of friends and family, and through neighbourhoods where he got referrals to other social networks or to individuals familiar with processes and experiences. This type of referral and use of social networks is a common practice that represents a valuable source of information, unique in the type of consumption that I am describing.

The sharing of own experiences with friends and acquaintances was an activity much talked about during my conversations in the field and throughout the open interviews. Sharing through such social networks is something my informants would actively do both before and after purchase. Before purchase, it was considered important to speak to someone who had already done this and been through such a process. Sharing experience was both about getting advice on practical issues concerning the actual purchase, and hearing stories of what it is like to own a vacation property in particular areas of Brazil. After purchase, and through the use of the vacation property, many became such a mediator themselves. Petter, a middle-aged informant who owned a vacation house in Pipa, maintained a central role in such a network. Claiming to have been more willing to purchase a vacation property

in Thailand or Vietnam, he became part of a social network once he purchased property in Brazil.

His story began when his brother built a house in Pipa and urged him to consider Brazil once a lot became vacant next to him in the Norwegian settlement “Colina dos Noruegueses”. For Petter, his brother and others from the town of Narvik became a source of information and knowledge about owning a vacation property in Brazil. This prompted him to travel there and purchase the vacant lot next to his brother within two days. While I was living in the same compound as him in Pipa, I could see how he himself had become a mediator and part of a network that had spurred other of his friends and acquaintances to make purchases in Pipa. I met with one of his friends from Narvik, Martin, who told me that one of the reasons for his purchase in Brazil was that Petter had already bought a house there. Martin stressed the importance of hearing about experiences from others, and claimed that most people are actually influenced by what other people say. To him, the experience he received from his network of people from Narvik was a significant contributing factor towards a purchase, which thereby became a crucial source of information for him.

Through social networks, experiences may be conveyed and to some extent even taught. Because of this, the unknown does not seem so unfamiliar after all. It might have been more intimidating had it not been for the fact that someone else had taken on the burden of having such experiences prior to their own. Given that, it is possible to see how this functions as a form of security for the individual. Knowing that this is something that has already been done by others, the purchase can promote a feeling of participation through a shared experience. It would seem that the importance of using social networks of friends and acquaintances had to do with the fact that it appeared as a more reliable source of expertise for the individual. Speaking with someone who had had a direct experience with the world of vacation property

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allowed many of my informants to gain certain knowledge of a country not yet visited, thus allowing them to take a risk they might not otherwise have taken.

### 3.2 “Visningsturer”

Another mediator of experience was represented by “visningsturer” conducted by the real-estate agencies. In the initiation of a probable sale, a visit to Brazil directed by collaborators in the various real-estate agencies was usually offered at a fairly reduced price. Although this is common practice, not many of my informants had participated on such excursions, mainly because this was a rather new practice in Brazil, which had not been on offer at the time of their purchase. However, I had the opportunity to follow a group of Norwegians on such a “visningstur”, in order to see how the presentation in specific areas of Brazil maintained the conception of dream homes. The main objective of “visningsturer” to Brazil, among other things, is to “meet with the magnificent nature, the delicious food, the culture and the nice people”<sup>25</sup>.

The week spent on such a trip would be filled with adventures in-between presentations of different real estate projects. What was set forth as being truly Brazilian and another way of life was important in the course of these visits. This was done primarily in order for the potential buyers to see what Brazil could offer that other locations could not. The material was not the main concern of the “visningstur”, seeing as not even the foundation of vacation property was moulded in concrete. As my informants had none or little knowledge of Brazil, and had purchased their properties unseen, most of those who went on such “visningsturer” had intended to establish some kind of familiarity with the country prior to purchase. Seeking out a feeling of safety

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<sup>25</sup> From homepage: [http://www.intersolinvest.no/forside/visningsturer\\_til\\_brasil/](http://www.intersolinvest.no/forside/visningsturer_til_brasil/) (23.07.07), my translation in English.

through such tours thus determined that there could be established some kind of security in the purchase *and* the unknown country.

### *An Establishment of Safety?*

The issue of safety and the point of not being fooled in the acquisition was something that would appear in everyday conversation and during more formal interviews. A profound confidence in real-estate agencies would often figure, in their stories, as a justification for having purchased something not seen other than on paper or digitally. Placing faith in a real-estate agency had a lot to do with their handling of practical issues such as the contents of a contract and trusting the placement of advance payments. It also had a lot to do with the fact that trust had to be placed in their knowledge about Brazil, with its environment and culture. When conventions and showcases on the subject of Brazil were not enough, the next step would be to offer a way in which to get familiar with all this through the arrangement of a “visningstur”.

Establishing “a sense of safety” on these tours, a frame of events and adventures would be provided with a specific goal. This would be a goal that both the seller and the buyer could benefit from. The experiences gathered on a “visningstur” were supposed to offer a certain amount of safety in order for the buyer to feel as if she could manage to establish a sense of a second home in Brazil, in the midst of various insecurities. If it could not provide this, there would be consequences for the real-estate agency, which would not be able to sell the vacation property, as well as for the buyer, who would feel too insecure to go through with the purchase. With this in mind, the real-estate agencies would have to present their buyers with the right type of Brazilian experience.

Activities on these trips to Brazil vary somewhat in form, but the content seems to be more or less the same. As stated by one real-estate agency; it is about *adventures* and *contrasts*. Participating on an arranged tour such as this,

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it was implied that a set of activities had already been planned with the aim of presenting a specific image of Brazil as a place worth returning to. The main activities were naturally concentrated around adventures with the aim of enjoyment. Buggy trips - surfing on sand dunes along the beach in an open car - were one such main activity, along with different water-related sports and shopping. Depending on age and gender, different parts of Brazil were presented with the objective of making the participants on these tours want more of what Brazil had to offer. The activities that were intended to contrast and diversify the adventures in Brazil were carefully selected. Not to scare people off the focus was naturally enough circled around safe episodes. One of the things I know to be a part of many arranged “visningsturer” is a visit to a near-by *favela*<sup>26</sup>. There, it was possible to experience what living in Brazil was really like, for some.

Activities such as this are intended to represent a real experience, but seem to be, as already stated, carefully selected. Activities, such as visiting some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Brazil, would be conducted within certain frames, so that the unfamiliar elements would not become totally unknown, and thus frightening. With the purchase of vacation properties, it was important that both of these features appeared as a fairly safe matter, as two such uncertain elements made the consumption practice even more risky. On that note, it was important that the selection of adventures was planned and more or less intentional, so that potential for the desired outcome of purchase was retained. Either way, experiencing Brazil seemed to be important both for the buyers and the sellers, as it allowed an increased feeling of confidence in their sale or purchase of vacation properties in Brazil. In that way, it could indeed be stated that “visningsturer” works as an establishment of safety for future second home owners.

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<sup>26</sup> A favela is a Brazilian term used to describe the area where low cost dwellings makes up a “slum” territory in Brazil, usually placed on the edge of the major cities.

### 3.3 “Servico Para Estrangeiros”

A Norwegian company operating in the area around Natal in Rio Grande do Norte consisted of two Norwegian men whose primary function was to provide services to foreigners (*servico para estrangeiros*), preferably Norwegians who owned vacation properties in this area. Assistance for Norwegians in settling into their vacation properties following purchase was a service that was not yet available at the time Norwegians had first arrived to settle on a more permanent basis in Rio Grande do Norte. Seeing and learning how some Norwegians were struggling in their new vacation home during their first visit to Brazil was the inception of the idea of creating such a company.

Their services would range from inspection of properties, to helping with visas and picking up Norwegians at the airport around the clock, to shopping for groceries prior to the arrival of their customers, to providing guided tours and arranging for towels to be cleaned. Such variation in services was all a part of the assistance that they offered in order for their clients to spend a concern-free vacation, allowing them to enjoy the surroundings of their vacation property. But this was not the main object of their service, as one of them so correctly states: “It is really our local knowledge that is sold”. As both of these men were married to Brazilian women and had settled down more or less permanently in Brazil, it was taken for granted that they had a unique kind of local knowledge. Seeing as they also spoke Portuguese (more or less), they had something that many of my informants were interested in. Through guided tours around the area, knowledge of local histories of the area and cultural explanations were provided to those Norwegians who would seek it out. In addition, having one of them along on visits into the city of Natal made it possible for Norwegian second home owners to take part in and learn from their experience with everyday life in Brazil. It seemed easier to gain such knowledge through this available company than to go about acquiring it with

own means. With this in mind, it is not hard to imagine how a thing like local knowledge was a relatively easy product to sell for the Norwegian company.

Many had great faith in these men's insights into local knowledge, and in their ability to understand a supposed particular Brazilian way of life. Among others, Jan-Erik placed his full confidence in them, because "firstly he is after all very familiar - he is married to a Brazilian woman that has taught him to understand how the Brazilians are thinking." Their trade in local knowledge therefore seemed trustworthy, and was often portrayed as a rich local knowledge gained through their living situation. Because of this, they were able to access particular parts of Brazilian culture that a seasonal second home owner could not. Furthermore, these men spoke the national language and were therefore able to communicate with the local community in ways that the Norwegian seasonal guests were not, seeing as they did not themselves speak Portuguese. Olav had employed these Norwegians on several occasions, and eagerly asserted that they could provide Norwegians with what he called an "elementary course" in the Brazilian way of life:

[H]e has taught us how to drive, like parking. There's a complex system here, you see. When you want to park, a boy comes along, and you do as he says and you go like this [signals thumps up], and when you return, the car is there. But if you do not give him the signal, you won't see your car again, they'll smash the window. Then you give him some money. [...] It's things like that, otherwise we wouldn't understand a thing. They pick us up at the airport and we drive straight to the grocery store and he takes the shopping trolley and walks around, helping us shop. [...] and tells us in what way they do things. It's simply an elementary course! [...] Imagine if I were to stand there in the airport, having arrived in the middle of the night, it wouldn't work. I'm totally dependent on these boys; it makes you comfortable because you don't make so many mistakes, and you understand much more at once.<sup>f</sup>

The importance of the Norwegian company for my informants is stated in a fairly conspicuous manner, in this quote. Claiming to be "totally dependent on these boys" had to do with the fact that if no one could show to the second home owners how the system worked, socially and culturally, they might never attain a proper understanding of how to deal with things in Brazil. With

no knowledge of the language and with little or no knowledge of the country as such, the owners were at a disadvantage. An advantage could be obtained, however, by seeking contact with mediators. Stating the point himself, Olav presented a story of how familiarity with the Norwegian company may provide such an advantage and function as a sort of “relief aid” in managing the seasonal life in Brazil. Seeing how another couple were struggling on their first visit to their vacation property in Buzios, Olav found it best to introduce them to this Norwegian company and their services. Later on that day, he found them in a grocery store, well taken care of by one of the men operating the Norwegian company. This was a totally necessary act for Olav, in order to provide them with the same elementary course that he received from the men in question

### **Concluding Remarks: Providers of Knowledge and Security**

The possibility of drawing on other people’s knowledge enables a quicker and smoother way into a cultural conceptualization of what is believed to constitute Brazil. This does not have to be a presentation of the whole picture, but little pieces that may contribute to a certain kind of understanding of the way things work. If not being interested in working hard at establishing this kind of understanding on ones own, a dependence are formed of other people, such as the mediators presented here. Social networks, the intermediaries in “visningsturer” and the people in establishments such as the Norwegian company were able to provide a certain kind of knowledge that seemed to be based on experiences. In effect, they may verify constructed ideas that were made in the motivations for second home purchase.

On the background of these mediators and their communication of local and cultural knowledge, this seemed a practical and well-functioning way in which to share experiences. When security is hard to find elsewhere, social networks, “visningsturer” and other are the main providers of a form of security for the individual who takes part in a consumption practice such as the one I am



describing. Just how objective and precise the knowledge provided by these social channels is should be an element of reflection, although this will not be discussed any further here. The central point of this chapter was that this kind of mediation of experience is a way in which to ground knowledge in a secure framework, a framework made up of known people or people from a familiar culture that can provide a sense of security when dealing with an unknown practice. The emphasis upon “the known” will be more in focus in the next chapters.

## **4. Establishing Homes and Transferring the Known**

Where the previous part has dealt with a vacation property with its motivations and mediation through active social channels, this part will deal with how the second home came into being. According to Longva, peoples experience with a new country and a new culture depends on our cultural baggage (2003:16). The establishment of a second home in Brazil involves in much the same way what is brought along from that baggage. Culture being something shared between individuals, something that takes form in a context, could be made more relevant in the meeting with a new country. In the second home context it seemed as a transmission of certain contents in such a cultural baggage was implemented. What my informants transferred of familiar aspects from own culture and tradition, could thereby seem to effect how a second home was developed as a socially constructive practice. The following chapter will look closer at such familiarities, represented through a Norwegian cottage tradition and aspects of nationality, and answer what part they played for the establishment of second homes in Brazil.

### **4.1 Extension of Tradition?**

There has been a fairly long tradition in Norway of establishing vacation properties away from home, appearing both as summerhouses and cottages. As Bjerke et al. claims: “to most people in Norway today, owning a cabin or knowing someone who has one seldom needs further explanation” (2006:87). This was much the case when I spoke with my informants on Norwegian establishments of cottages. It was most often a practice taken for granted, and to go into further detail about it was difficult as it was hard for them to pin down what it actually meant. Moreover, most of the informants were clear about the fact that their second home in Brazil had nothing to do with a

cottage tradition. The cottage tradition could be said to be an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm 1992) as it can be traced back to the 1960s as an establishment with relative rapid increase until today. When appearing as “a set of practices [...] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with suitable historical past.” (Hobsbawm 1992:1); could it be that this existing tradition had an effect on the establishment of second homes in such vast distances? Stripped down to the mere basics, owning a vacation property would appear as the same thing, being second homes in Brazil or cottages in Norway. Viewed apart from their functions, ideas and uses, these two vacation house forms could as such materialize as merely different representatives for the exact same thing. All of my informants had a particular notion of the establishment of vacation properties in Norway and many of them had at least one Norwegian cottage within the family<sup>27</sup>. Having grown up with a leisure time that was spent mostly in cottages and summer houses; they certainly had an intimate knowledge with establishing this type of home, away from home.

#### **4.1.1 Work, Leisure and Personal Relations to *Home***

How leisure time is spent in different vacation properties varies, but a common feature could be said that it is spent in recreation. Whether this implies doing nothing, experiencing an adventure or working, it would fall under recreational activities. One exclusive trait that appears through the cottage tradition in Norway is a merging relationship between work and leisure time. Work, in the cottage setting should be nothing like the work that is done in everyday life, in the form of planned waged labour or employment. It represents a way to create and maintain the cottage in own time, and, with

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<sup>27</sup> To my knowledge 16 of them had a cottage in Norway and three of them had more than one. All had particular ideas of what the typical or traditional cottage was, and more than 16 had grown up with a cottage in the family that was much used.

own means. This type of work establishes a form of freedom rather than one of obligation (Eggset 2001:38) and turned work into a form of recreation for the individuals involved. Jan-Erik's description of his time spent with his wife in one of his cottages is as follows:

When the summer and spring comes we spend time at Fjellstrand and stroll around because we like to go about and pusle. Torill likes the garden and I like to paint and fixing things, so we relax with doing that.<sup>g</sup>

Jan-Erik's relationship to work in his cottage in Norway denotes what Alf Eggset believed to be a special form of work in the cottage setting. To "pusle"<sup>28</sup> had a recreational effect on Jan-Erik when it was something done willingly and by own means, and helped him relax in a way that could not be done in the obligations of the everyday life. As this represented a way to recreate for Jan-Erik, he relaxed in Brazil even if it was not through working and "pusling" with his home. Vacation and leisure time was for him in Brazil strictly parted from work. Jan-Erik's idea of the vacation in Brazil could by that seem to represent what the idea of leisure time usually amounts to; the time spent free from work. Being that he was a man with a very demanding job, his use of the vacation home in Brazil represented both a divide between work in the cottage and the waged labour he performed at home that took up most of his time. By that, his vacation in Brazil was simply about relaxing and experiencing something different from home.

Keeping leisure time free from work altogether turned out to be one of the most distinctive features when spending time in the second home in Brazil. What was considered to be recreation by my informants was doing as little as possible of the activities that resembled home. Strong emphasis was put on getting away from everyday life in the motivation of second home ownership, and that was maintained throughout the use of the second home. Eggset

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<sup>28</sup> "Pusle" is a Norwegian term that can be used when referring to a type of work that is free of obligations and done mostly for ones own sake. It is therefore a word that often can be seen used in the cottage setting.

describes the type of work done in the Norwegian cottage as a constructive process that makes the cottage what it is, and forms a certain tie to the cottage that often could appear as stronger than to the primary home (Eggset 2001:38f). When the efforts put into the cottage through work produces meaning for the individuals, it shapes a sense of belonging, which is unique in the description of what is known by many as a typical Norwegian cottage. As such it challenges the general divide between work and leisure often presented as a definition of leisure time. If this is true for the cottage established in Norway, in what way were second *homes* established in Brazil with its strong divide between work and leisure time? By looking closer to improvement of the home this question should be answered in the section to follow.

### *Work and Improvement as a Constructive Process*

When conducting the pre-study, it seemed to me that it was not the material basis of the apartments or the houses bought in Brazil that was of particular interest. Asking about their expectations towards how the vacation property would look, I was often given the notion that it was not the material standard which was of motivation. “I did not purchase the apartment just to sit inside it”, was a phrase many of my informants uttered. Together with the established ideas around owning a vacation home in Brazil it could imply an unconcerned posture towards the vacation property itself. However, when present in the field, seeing people’s first meetings with their vacation home and those who had owned their second home for a longer period of time, I saw that it was first and foremost through altering and improving the home that it indeed became a *home*.

Where own work in making alterations formed a personal relationship to the cottage, the work on the second home in Brazil was not primarily done by the owners. Improvements made by the individual owners were rather concentrated on a more decorative scale, focusing on applying a personal touch to an apartment that was basically the same as all the others in an

apartment condominium. Depending on what degree a wish was made upon establishing a feeling of home, the amount of personal attachment varied. I found that the ways to create a personal attachment to the vacation home ranged from hanging up curtains and paintings to building a new kitchen and altering a planned room structure. If the work needed greater alterations, help was hired for these changes to be made. No matter how big an effort was made upon applying a personal touch, it seemed to have a huge effect on the way the owners experienced the vacation property as a home.

Most claimed not to have the time to do work on the vacation property in Brazil themselves as there were so many other things to see and to experience when first visiting their vacation home. Due to the geographical distance, it limited the frequency of visits to Brazil and not many had the opportunity to spend a great amount of time there. One exception was a young couple, Vegard and Therese that spent two and a half months every year in their house on “Colina dos Noruegueses”. Since they spent more time than two or three weeks there, which was often the timeframe most of my informants had, they had much time to use as they wanted. From what Therese told me, they had done huge alterations, probably more so than any other Norwegian second home owner I had met. Since their house was raised in 2004, they had built an extra floor, a veranda, a pool and improved the general appearance of the house. Even if they had used about one month out of every stay by altering and improving their home, they claimed to be happy and pleased with doing this form of work in their vacation. Doing mostly all of the work themselves, they emphasized most explicitly to have formed a personal relation to their house. Vegard stressed that by denying that it was their cottage away from home, it was in fact their *home*, probably more so than the home that they rented in Norway. On that background, it could be claimed that the work itself, but also the improvement, are a constitutive process upon vacation properties.

### *Leisure Time and Self-Effort: Adding a Personal Touch*

Not all were that eager to make an effort into adding a personal dimension to their apartment or house, and certainly few people made such alterations as Vegard and Therese. Still, there seemed an idea in existence that one *should* add a personal touch to this vacation property. Otherwise, it would not be a home. Since most of my informants did not have more than two or three weeks to spend in their vacation home, the work supposed to be done in a vacation home was characterized more as an obligation than a relaxing, leisure time aimed at the recreational “pusling”. Few had any interest in spending most of their vacation in an unfamiliar country working on the vacation home. Instead, help was hired when needed to make bigger alterations, so that they were able to enjoy their vacation while someone else did the work for them. As Johannes, the owner of a bungalow in Buzios Tropical declared “We only come down here to get a vacation and to place a personal mark on the house, that is, we have spent a lot of money on it, but we haven’t done the work ourselves.” Most of the work in Mossevik where his and his wife Lise’s cottage was placed had been done by them, but when they vacated to Brazil they focused on enjoying other sides of a vacation. Not only that, letting someone else do the work would not destroy their feeling of personal attachment to the vacation home when it was believed to be of assistance to the local community by contributing to employment. As Lise says:

[W]hy not let a Brazilian work and earn that money? And we can get more vacation. Because it is not that which is important to us, standing outside and paint and doing things. Its better that we walk around and get familiar here.<sup>h</sup>

Many of my informants already owned a cottage in Norway where they spent their weekends going about doing small repairs and maintaining the state of the cottage. It seemed that very few of them were interested in having this sort of relationship to a vacation property in such a vast distance. In addition, the cost to hire such help was not much compared to what it would cost in Norway. “One is allowed this form of luxury in Brazil”, as Petter, the owner of a big house in Pipa said. In that way, it made sense that most Norwegians

purchased vacation properties with hired help that took care of maintenance during the months without visitors. It enabled these Norwegians to use their holidays in Brazil doing whatever they wanted without much sense of obligation. As Johannes described his families stay in their second home:

We have done the work at home on our own, but down here we have more or less a vacation. We're here to bask in the sun, to bathe and to experience the local community, drawing on the cultural; at least I think that I and Lise are like that. So we lay aside the work here. We put away our work clothes.<sup>i</sup>

This active use of self-effort was not something reflected upon by my informants in general, but it showed to be quite effective. The function of applying a personal touch however was much spoken of and was something that was considered to be of crucial importance when establishing a home in Brazil. Shaping the second home was therefore possible through smaller alterations that did not require help from friends, family or relatives. It seemed by that established as homes in much the same way as a cottage when it was improved and worked on in order to provoke a personal relationship to it. Even if it was not done by their hands, the idea that a home needed alteration in order to gain that personal feature was something that established it as a *home*, away from home. By that it would seem as a familiar element was brought along in the establishment of Norwegian cottages, which contributed to the making of a vacation property as a second home.

#### **4.1.2 Shaping Homes Away From Everyday Life**

Different use of the natural surroundings is another important element that sets the Norwegian cottage aside as a particular type of vacation home. Originating from traditional work in Norway, outdoors, these activities have been popular leisure and recreational activities where the aim has purely been to enjoy being outdoors (Vittersø 2007:269) When describing a typical Norwegian cottage, the draw upon nature in one way or another was crucial for my informants, whether placed in the mountains or in the forest, by the sea or by a lake. As



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Norwegians often use time outdoors as a form of recreation (Eggset 1991:60), much the same could be seen in relation to the time that was spent in the vacation home in Brazil. The very outdoors however, turned out to be of different character.

### *Use of the Surroundings*

Nature, being an arena where adventures were sought out was much used in vacation home settings. When the nature that surrounds many cottages in Norway is described by some as an untamed wilderness that man needs to be sheltered from, second homes in Brazil did not depict nature in the same way. The pleasant climate and the relatively strenuous-free integration with nature was what the informants often pointed as one of the main advantages of owning a vacation property in Brazil. “I did not purchase the apartment just to sit inside it”, was again a valid phrase to indicate the use of the natural surroundings in the vacation home setting in Brazil. The use of the outskirts of the vacation property indicated something of a similarity to the Norwegian cottage mainly in the act of withdrawing from it<sup>29</sup>. By that, both the surroundings of the vacation property as well as the vacation property itself were important as it existed as a contrast to activities and actions taken in the first home.

The importance for my informants to undertake daily trips was a trait that could seem to have been transmitted from the cottage tradition. Wanting to “bruke kroppen”<sup>30</sup> was a frequent expression used by my informants. Even though they were on a vacation, free to do whatever they wished, taking trips either arranged or going by foot was of crucial relevance. This was often both done in order to experience their surroundings *and* to “bruke kroppen”. Once

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<sup>29</sup> Withdrawal is further taken care of later in the chapter.

<sup>30</sup> A Norwegian term that I do not find a suitable term for in English, literary it means “using the body”.

spending spare time in the cottage, the main activity there consisted of taking trips and going for short walks. Where it was the nature itself that may pose challenges for the utilization of natural surroundings in the cottage context, nature and at least the climate of Brazil was rather of help to my informants.

Wandering in the surroundings of the vacation properties did most often not represent any challenge by nature itself. Even so, it was not the physical use of nature *per se* that was of importance when going on a daily walk, like it was in the cottage setting in Norway. It was not the stroll along beaches that represented a real challenge to my informants as much as it was meeting with other peoples. The challenge was placed with facing another culture and the way people lived in other ways than at home. It was desirable to meet with other people on these trips, but it also represented a confrontation itself to attempt to communicate with people who were considered to be different from the owners themselves. So, it seems right to state that where it is the nature in itself that is considered to be a challenge in the cottage setting in Norway; it was people and the meetings with them that posed a challenge in Brazil. As Bjerke et al. claims that second homes in Norway allowed people to commune with nature (2006:87), the second home in Brazil allowed its owners to commune with people and to a certain extent; culture.

The surroundings of vacation properties in Brazil mostly consisted of other houses and apartments and laid therefore a foundation for an extensive social contact to take place. In the traditional cottage however, the human neighbour was placed far away making the natural surrounding a closest neighbour. In that way taking a walk in the areas around the cottage did not contribute to observing a different culture and local living arrangements as walks around the vacation property in Brazil did<sup>31</sup>. A Norwegian nature tradition that Nina Witoszek (1997) describes focuses around man's conquering of nature, and as

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 5 for more on the social interaction between Norwegians and the locals.

a way to keep the Norwegian identification with nature alive, the cottage functioned both as a shelter from *and* closeness to natural surroundings. The vacation home in Brazil functioned in much the same way as a shelter from *and* closeness to something in the immediate affiliation; people and culture.

### *Withdrawing to Home*

The natural surroundings of a cottage may be seen in relation to the “koselighet”<sup>32</sup> achieved when withdrawing indoors from the natural environment. A cottage placed in such circumstances did not have the privilege of inlaid water and electricity, due to its relative exclusion. With the use of candle light and open fireplace its function as a shelter seemed to be nostalgically described as the ultimate “koselighet”, by some informants. Spending time in nature and withdrawing from it into cottages was not so far from how life was shaped in the second home in Brazil. A “koselighet” that was spent mostly with family in the private sphere in the cottage (Vittersø 2007:268) was rather spent with a travel companion and others residing in that same condominium. Therefore, where the cottage has mostly had the function of gathering family, spending time together both indoors and outdoors, the vacation home in Brazil had a more social form where owners interacted with strangers and mere acquaintances as well as family and friends. The social activities were not based inside, but placed in social arenas either within the condominium or outside. The importance of withdrawing from the outskirts of the vacation property was none the less the same, even if it took a slightly different form.

### *The Comfortable Home*

Just like the act of withdrawing from the natural surroundings and into the cottage, so did my informants withdraw to the comforts of their second home

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<sup>32</sup> A Norwegian term to describe cozy. See amongst others: Gullestad (1989) and Brusdal (2006)

in Brazil. The standard of the interior of second homes in Brazil and the traditional cottage in Norway was highly different than the home in Brazil in that it should not be lacking anything. As Petter put it earlier in the chapter; one may welcome a form of luxury in one's second home. In much the same regard, there is emerging a new form of cottages in Norway that puts emphasis on the standard of a cottage. *Hyttemagasinet* presented "the Norwegian dream cottage" based on a survey done by *TNS Gallup*. According to the survey what most Norwegians want nowadays is a cottage "suitably big, rural, new and comfortable with water and electricity, with just a few steps to your own pier and beach"<sup>33</sup>, this point toward a shift in the demands of cottages nowadays. Where cabin life has traditionally been associated with "primitiveness" (Vittersø 2006:268), other expectations now apply that are tied to a wish for greater convenience that in the same way pushes aside work for the sake of spending free time more freely. As Robert compares his Norwegian cottage with the vacation home in Brazil, emphasizing the parallel between home and comfort:

A cottage is where everything is primitive, you carry water and light the fire with wood and have open-air activities. You go skiing, walk by foot, and do some fishing and things like that, while you *live* here [in Brazil]. I would rather say that it becomes more as a second home, in that it is more comfortable to live here.<sup>j</sup>

Conquering nature is not as important anymore when cottages are far more accessible and the surrounding nature less harsh. There seem to be other adventures to be sought out. Where it was family that primarily spent time in cottages in remote areas, the new cottage forms are rather placed with convenient reach from the primary home and with access to richer social activities, not only focused around the nuclear family. This can also be seen with an increasing focus upon functionalities and to gain a personal touch to the vacation home in Brazil. Even if my informants travelled to such distances

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<sup>33</sup> "Hyttemagasinet" 01.09.2006: p.10

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to get away from their everyday life, it did not imply that a sacrifice should be made upon the conveniences known from home. Eggeset claims that that “the uses of the outskirts create a need for a shelter” (1991:31), and that it was this function that first made Norwegians raise primitive cottages. The use of the second home in Brazil and the cottages in Norway could, by that, be viewed as a similar matter when providing its owners with such a shelter. However, the natural surrounding of these different vacation properties varied and so did their uses.

### *Second Homes in Brazil as another Cottage?*

Although several traits have been transferred and there exist distinct similarities, the second home that is established in Brazil does not indicate an extension of the cottage tradition *per se*. Besides being a common meeting ground for vacations, it has taken on a form of its own. Vittersø describes the cabin life as being ““back to nature” primitiveness and outdoor recreation where the enjoyment of nature is a fundamental part” (2007:268). My description of second home life in Brazil is slightly different. Built mostly on seeking out adventures in form of cultural elements, the second home was more about seeking such experiences when not socially residing within the home or the condominium. The second home settlement in Brazil should therefore not be directly linked to the establishment of Norwegian cottages, but it should neither be viewed as a totally separate practice. With such an establishment within their own country, my informants’ knowledge and experience is more than evident in this section. As such it could be an element that has had an effect on the second home creation, even if the location is very different. As a familiar element upon the establishment, however, it does not work alone. This will be clarified through the next part which deals with how the known functions through an explicit focus upon nationality and how that works as establishing homes preferably in relation to other Norwegians.

## 4.2 The Known Through Nationality

Asking explicitly about my informants' relationship to being a Norwegian in the vacation home setting in Brazil it seemed to reveal an unconcerned attitude towards the significance of any type of nationality<sup>34</sup>. Claiming by most not to be an object of discussion or even reflection, I assumed that being of different nationalities was not of particular importance, in the second home context. That proved to be a relatively simplistic assumption. During fieldwork in Brazil an implicit focus upon the importance of nationality was revealed. Having a hard time establishing a sense of belonging to the Brazilian society, the sense of belonging was rather placed within the owners second home. In this lies the importance of establishing *home* within a relatively unknown setting. Taking comfort in known elements extended to nationality when being a Norwegian was crucial to implementing elements that were of practical and social significance. In that, this section will show in what way nationality worked as a familiar element important in the establishment of the surroundings of home.

### 4.2.1 Nationality in Acquisition

How nationality came into play was revealed firstly through the actual purchase of a vacation property. Building on a wish to be safe, purchasing from a Norwegian real estate agency was considered crucially important for mostly all of my informants. The use of Norwegian agencies that mediated such properties was for my informants an important confirmation of reliability. "It costs a bit more, but I would rather spend that than risk losing a

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<sup>34</sup> The way I use nationality here and throughout the thesis refers to how my informants saw the term and used it. Having a specific nationality simply implied being from one specific country or nation state. Nationality, whatever methodological or theoretical implications the term contains, in this case refers more or less to the idea that the basis of difference between groups of humans is founded upon which country you come from.

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lot of money” Jan-Erik stated, pointing to the significance of using Norwegian companies as a hedge against not being fooled in the acquisition.

### *Norwegian Companies*

The importance of purchasing from a Norwegian based company was an element much stressed by my informants, and through media, (Norwegian) real estate agencies and diverse mediators of experience. Through the quality of first and foremost being a *Norwegian* company, established according to Norwegian laws and conduct it was considered to be of a relatively free of risks for the second home owners. Reluctant to go through the processes on their own, Norwegian real estate agencies was therefore believed to be safer and easier to deal with as they took care of all arrangements leading up to the purchase of property in Brazil. Having contracts translated into Norwegian and placing down-payments in a secure Norwegian bank were some of the issues they appreciated when using a Norwegian real estate agency. Many even stated that they would have never purchased their vacation property, had it not been done through a Norwegian agency. With the continuous rumours the second home owners was exposed to of incidents and stories where things had gone wrong, dealing with people that spoke the same language and dealt with the same law felt safer for them. Being able to place the blame on someone if anything went wrong made it easier to choose to purchase vacation property in Brazil, without expecting to “gå på en smell”<sup>35</sup>, as one informant saw it.

This was also something that Norwegian real estate agencies played on when they marketed the safety of their product through their status as a Norwegian real estate agency. Claiming that the purchase was totally safe because they were a *Norwegian* company, it was seldom that advertisements rather

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<sup>35</sup> A Norwegian expression for messing up by making a judgment that turned out to be a wrong one.

emphasized their extensive experience with this sort of purchase. This was recognized by Andrè, one of the managers of a Norwegian real estate company based in Brazil. He drew my attention to it firstly by proclaiming that the Norwegians trust in Norwegian real estate agencies seemed ridiculous. He claimed that, had it been a street full of experienced and skilled real estate agencies with much knowledge of buying and selling property in Brazil; the fact that it was not a *Norwegian* company would prevent Norwegians from buying from them. But if a Norwegian real estate agency would open at the end of the road he was sure that the Norwegians would come running, just by the characteristic of being Norwegian. This scenario, posed by André, exemplifies greatly the favouring of Norwegian agencies over an agency's capacity to provide extensive experience.

### *Safely Purchasing*

The occupation with completing a safe purchase through the use of Norwegian companies seemed to be much due to Norwegian newspapers. Their presentation of stories documenting “foolish” Norwegians being deceived into paying for something that turned out to be a fraud led to a certain amount of suspicion, for many of the second home owners. I met several Norwegians that had not received what they had paid for, but although none of them were foolish in any way, they all thought that it would have been best to deal with Norwegian based companies. Not that it could provide an ultimate protection against being hustled; it none the less gave these Norwegians “the possibility to yell at someone in one's own language if something went wrong”, as one of my informants stated. It was not only considered to be safer, but also more convenient to deal with known and familiar aspects, as processes and the more practical aspects are done in the same manner as if purchasing something in Norway. The lack of language skills would also pose difficulties in the communication between buyer and seller. This could serve as a justification for the favouritism of using Norwegian agencies. In addition, it is a part of an



understanding of why condominiums were organized by nationality as a dominating element of familiarity.

#### 4.2.2 Organizing a Housing Cooperative

In many of the condominiums I visited, there seemed to be a big concern with keeping the board principally controlled by Norwegians. While this did not pose any problem since most of the condominiums where Norwegians lived had only Norwegian inhabitants, one of the condominiums had people from different nationalities. This was a so called mixed compound where the apartments were owned by Scandinavians and Brazilians, with a predominance of Norwegians. One of the main objectives for the Norwegian inhabitants of this condominium was to get Norwegians into the dominating positions in the board of the cooperative, despite the fact that Norwegians visited their apartments less frequent than the Brazilians, who now managed it. This was considered to be a benefit for the (Norwegian) owners as that made it possible to implement rules and modes of conduct more to the Norwegian liking. The advantage of organizing housing cooperatives that consisted only of Norwegians was described in the following way, by Hans:

[I]t was quite safe to know that there were only Norwegians and Swedes there. Since it was a bit uncertain according to investment and such, and that you're always uncertain when you purchase in a foreign country. [...] That it was a security in the fact that you're establishing a housing cooperative, you're supposed to send money, well paying jointly expenses. [...] In relation to the organization of the whole management of the property and things like that, it was important that there were Norwegians. Had it been solely Brazilians then you kind of have less control over the joint expenses for example. How the hell do they pay? When it is Norwegians than you know that they, Norwegians in general are good payers I believe.<sup>k</sup>

As Hans here states, when it came to the practicalities, dealing with Norwegians was an element of assurance for him. When making a cooperative work in an unknown country it was important that the rules set out were implemented by all and that such things like payments happened on a regulated basis. Dealing with people of the same nationality implied a safety

for Hans that assured him, being responsible for the economic management of the cooperative, that the bills were paid in time and that the general conduct of the cooperative worked as it should. Agreeing upon certain rules and following them was an important feature for my informants when establishing some form of tranquillity in the surroundings of the second home. To relate to people of the same nationality made it easier for them to implement known elements in the establishment of rules and to agree upon practical issues important when making a housing cooperative work. This was, thereby, increasing the feeling of safety that seemed to come from familiar elements such as nationality.

### **Concluding Remarks: The Importance of Familiarity**

Wanting to experience something different from home while at the same time being able to establish a familiarity within an unknown context, was possible through implementing known elements from an already existing tradition of establishing cottages in Norway. Also, by transferring known elements, nationality applied to the establishment of condominiums. Being from the same country was important to my informants as it produced a form of community in light of sharing a common culture. Being able to relate to others with the same background made it possible to share known elements that were familiar to one another. Both in the acquisition and use of the vacation home it made my informants feel safer when relating primarily to people of the same nationality and to those believed to be of the same culture. Not only did it feel safer, it was also much more convenient. Transferring known elements through the force of being Norwegian thus seemed to be a crucial part of the establishment of second homes, as a home away from home.

Nationality was not only important in the more practical aspects of settling in Brazil. When it came to dealing with the second home surroundings, nationality and a specific type of Norwegian-ness was deployed to form relations that came through social interactions. As such, the next chapter will

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deal with nationality, being a familiar aspect both when relating to those of the same familiar nature and when meeting “the others”, i.e. the Brazilians.

## 5. Mapping Social Interactions

Interaction is an act made by at least one human being that is answered in whatever way by another human being. Edmund Leach (1967) claimed that the smallest entity that could be studied of society is the relation established between these two individuals. By that, it could be claimed that this is in fact the building block of society (Eriksen 1998:55). Thus, social relations formed between people *through* interaction are of significant importance to study in the second home context. It is also meaningful to ask in what way the use of the second home may be of relevance to the creation and maintenance of certain relations between people. Relating to the motivations of second home ownership, how does the social interaction function once present in the second home? This chapter shall attend to the mapping of social interactions based on how Norwegians interact amongst themselves and to others.

### 5.1 A Norwegian Social Community

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, nationality was important in the organization of condominiums. The importance of being from the same country was not only signified through the practicalities of sharing the same laws and the same economic systems, it also extended to the belief that being from the same country they shared the same culture. For my informants, culture worked as a term to describe specific modes of being that were related first and foremost to the nation one belonged to. When they pointed to culture as being something they shared with other Norwegians, it seemed to play a significant role when it came to socially organizing themselves as Norwegians in the unknown territory of Brazil. Being from the same country had a social significance when it affected interaction and the ways my informants related to known elements of perceived cultural similarities. This came into play both when relating to members of the same nationality and to those of different

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nationalities. This part will, by that, handle the social interaction that took place between Norwegians, in the second home context.

### 5.1.1 Norwegian Condominiums

#### *Sharing Culture, Sharing Nationality*

In the outskirts of Natal, most condominiums seemed to consist of people from the same country. It seemed, for example, that a condominium's residents were Norwegian, Spanish, Portuguese or Brazilian. The importance of being from the same country when sharing such a condominium was of great significance for my informants. Answering the question as to how important being surrounded by Norwegians was at his condominium, Robert answers in the following manner: "In fact, I think that is very important, for socialising. What if you had been all alone here and everybody spoke Portuguese? I believe that would have been a bit lonely". Robert owned an apartment in a "mixed" condominium where Norwegians and Brazilians lived together. Being alone implied by that having to spend his vacation in a condominium where no other Norwegians were present. Even if the condominium were filled with people, Robert felt that he would still feel alone when none of them spoke Norwegian or any other language he could understand.

The possibility to integrate with people of the same nationality often involved speaking the same language, and having a known culture to relate to. Being of the same nationality had a social significance for my informants when it affected interaction and the ways they related to known elements in the second home context. Sharing nationality implied for them that they also shared culture. Thereby, having a second home in a Norwegian condominium was perceived to be necessary, when it allowed the owners to socially interact. Having someone to share things with implied, as Robert points to, that they spoke the same language and through that were able to communicate. When

he spent time in his “mixed” condominium without other Norwegians present, he was, by that, not able to communicate with the other owners.

Only a couple of the owners that I talked to were more or less able to speak and understand Portuguese. English being a less common language in Brazil as compared to Norway, communication between the Norwegians and Brazilians that lived in such a mixed condominium was poor. Even so, the social interaction with the Swedes that lived in that condominium was not so high either, despite the similarities in language. “We don’t take much notice of the Swedes that are here, they keep to themselves”, Robert said when explaining who he spent time with when staying in his “mixed” condominium in Buzios. Socially interacting primarily with the Norwegians in his condominium, it would seem as if a social community to other owners was sought out through nationality, with the notion that they shared certain cultural values. If social interactions were sought out on the basis of nationality and cultural similarities, it is understandable that Robert would feel lonely when not being able to communicate with others. The social relevance of the establishment of Norwegian condominiums also has significance when it comes to the feeling of safety that being surrounded by Norwegians gives. This is evident in the following statement, given by Håkon:

Yes, it meant a lot [that the condominium consisted of Norwegians], if not we would probably not have bought it. We felt that we were dependent both on buying Norwegian and owning, ‘cause then I feel safer. And that there are Norwegians living here. I don’t think I would have moved into a condominium if there were only Portuguese there for example. You could say, they’re probably nice people, it’s not that, but it is the unity you get when you understand them and have the same culture.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding each other was easier for people who were from the same country and a part of the same culture. Cultural similarities were placed as a signifier for nationality and were for of vital importance for many Norwegian second home owners in ensuring their feeling of safety. What nationality had to offer in that regard was “security and perceived stability at a time when life worlds are fragmented and people are being uprooted” (Eriksen 2002:104).

Even if my informants may not find their own life worlds particularly uprooted or fragmented, nationality none the less provided them with a feeling of stability. Also, a feeling of safety was found in the awareness that one shared nationality with others operating within another nation state.

Not intending discrimination on the background of being of another nationality, Håkon simply admitted that not knowing much about the Portuguese way of life or language could make it harder for him to interact with Brazilians. On the other hand, living with Norwegians in a condominium may enable a union to be established that is easier to uphold when the owners could understand each other, both through language and familiarity with each others culture. It was not that my informants did not accept and understand that cultural differences existed; on the contrary, they indeed accepted it. But they were reluctant to relate to such different modes of being within their condominium. It posed much less effort and was more convenient to live with Norwegians in a Norwegian condominium as this was more familiar to them. If, to my informants, culture represented a way of being and relating to known elements, then agreeing upon certain elements of familiarity was important.

### **5.1.2 Norwegian Neighbourliness**

One element that to a great extent to have been transferred from everyday life in Norway was a sense of neighbourliness that came from living together with Norwegians. Interacting with other Norwegians and building good relationships with neighbours in the same condominium, made the social interaction between neighbours the main relation that formed in the second home setting. Neighbourliness between Norwegians served as a solid foundation from which the second home owners could interact within a socially familiar arena. The relations between neighbours seemed also to be of more lasting character than others that were formed in the second home setting. Since they were more or less bound to the same place through

ownership, it made the formation of such affiliations all the more important to these Norwegian second home owners.

Through living in a Norwegian condominium the owners had an excellent possibility to get to know each other. This was something appreciated and indeed taken advantage of whenever they wished to do so. Living with the second home owners in a Norwegian condominium provided me with a good opportunity to participate in the social interactions that took place. Being a Norwegian myself, I was included in the community even though I was not a second home owner. Since I was first and foremost characterised by my status as a Norwegian in a foreign country, just like them, it made it easier for me to get in touch with and to be considered as (more or less) a natural part of the condominium. As it was not unusual for people of the same nationality to approach each other, I was able to approach and get to know other Norwegians apart from only those owners that I shared a condominium with. Making it easier to move in and out of different condominiums and social arenas getting in touch with other Norwegians, my status as a Norwegian worked very much in my favour.

The ability to form relations with other that were not that different from themselves allowed for a social integration to take place between the owners of such second homes. Johan explained that he found his second home in Brazil to be particularly nice due to the fact that he was able to meet many of the other owners of his condominium, making it a very social condominium to live in. Getting to know their neighbours formed an attachment to those having the same type of experience. It allowed for the condominium and the second home to be perceived as a safe haven where the owners could feel at home. As Torill, one of the Norwegian second home owners said:

We thought that there would be more on our age here, but they were about the same age as Kari, between twenty-five and thirty. And we had a wonderful time barbecuing and everything, so we felt like a big family.<sup>m</sup>



Meeting with most of the owners, or at least those who spend most vacations in their second homes, it was possible for my informants to feel as if they were entering a familiar zone. To relate to people of the same nationality allowed a further feeling of home to emerge and it seemed as if a bit from their first home was brought along. In the notion of familiarity that Torill expressed, being part of a Norwegian community provided the second home owners with family-like relations to their neighbours. This provided them with a form of security that could be sought out whenever they felt like it.

### *Social Arenas*

Having neighbours that were of known character did not mean that social contact came with an unrestricted access. This social contact was sought out when it was found appropriate to do so. Appropriateness was easily signified. Most of the Norwegian condominiums were built in more or less the same way, with apartments or bungalows surrounding a pool, a restaurant and/or a social focal point consisting of tables and chairs intended for gatherings and general interactions. These common areas were meant primarily for social interactions. Almost all of the apartments had a balcony overlooking the common areas and facing each other. If not invited into the second home for a cup of coffee or a beer then it was not that common for neighbours to visit each other without an invitation. Although, when I showed up unannounced one time, I was welcomed with a smile and a cup of coffee. The nature of the condominium and social contact is evident through Robert's description:

[I]t is also like that when we sit on the same surface and that is much more social, we think. So we have much more contact with each other. In contrast to if we were to sit on a veranda by ourselves. And we have the common areas.<sup>n</sup>

Seeking out social interactions was something that could be done more or less actively. The common areas facilitated diverse social activities such as barbecuing, a joint lunch or a coffee break. This made it possible for the owners to seek out those places alone, hoping that someone would come and

keep them company. The second home owners were therefore allowed to choose whether or not to participate in the social arenas which were set out for them. During a birthday celebration in Buzios Tropical where all neighbours were invited, I spoke with some of my informants of the need to have such a place where they could seek out social interactions. One of them, an older woman pointed to the fact that it was “nice to have somewhere where one can be social”. Such social arenas functioned as a place where owners could spend time in the company of other Norwegians. However, it could also function as a space in which to withdraw from such social contact. This was done by one of the neighbours during the birthday celebration in description. Deliberately avoiding the social space Kirsten strolled past us over to the restaurant in the condominium, purchased an Irish coffee and went back up to her apartment, greeting her neighbours. By that she chose not to participate in the social gathering and withdrew to her own apartment, enjoying the company of a drink.

Having specific areas where social interaction could be initiated, while maintaining the second home as a place from which to withdraw to, such social restrictions made it quite easy for the owners to know how to relate to one another. Being familiar with the boundaries for social contact, the limitations were less demanding to respect and enabled social limitations to be put up for oneself when the neighbourliness seemed too dominating. This would be a confirmation of the second home as feeling like a safe haven for its owners.

### *Meaningful Conversations*

When the Norwegians I met with spent time with their neighbours, it was most often to chat and to speak of things that were known to them. The most talked about subject was what had happened in Norway during the past time. “Any news from home?” was one of the most used phrases when talking amongst themselves. This was especially true if someone had recently arrived from

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Norway. They would be bombarded with questions of how things were back in the “good-old country”. Even if those asking about it had only been away for a week or two, keeping oneself updated on happenings in Norway was important to most of the people I met. Reading news on the internet, checking mail, and other such activities, were often done on a daily basis and sometimes more often than that. When there was a snowstorm back in Norway during my fieldwork, one of my informants checked his e-mail, the news and telephoned home several times a day. Being from Risør, one of the places that were hit the hardest, his conversations during that period were limited to referring to how lucky we were that we did not have to shovel snow or were blocked inside by snow. More often, such conversations were an invitation to a further chat and a general comparison between Norway and Brazil as different countries and different cultures.

### *The Character of Neighbourliness*

Since the establishment of Norwegian condominiums generated social interactions between those of the same nationality, a form of neighbourliness could be established. Even though they may seem to be relations of a lasting character, the enduring aspect of it was most often restricted to the visits made to the second home. It was rare that this neighbourly contact made in Brazil was pursued once returned home to Norway, though, there were exceptions. One such exception was the contact established between my informants Torill and Jan-Erik and their closest neighbour in a condominium in Brazil. During their first visit in their second home in the Easter holidays they were eleven people on the condominium that spent time together barbecuing and making conversation around the pool. One of these conversations revealed that their neighbour in the condominium owned a summer house right next to them in Norway. Since that, their relationship as neighbours developed and resulted in several invitations and social gatherings in the cottage setting in Norway. The

connection between them turned out to be a dual neighbourliness that enabled a lasting relationship brought home to Norway.

Even if the owners did not move to Brazil on a more permanent basis nor had any intention to do so, the point of having known neighbours to relate to was considered to be more than a benefit. Kari spoke of her and her husband's wish to get to know other people in the same condominium; "Getting to know people is important", she said. Proclaiming that the condominium was arranged in a way to promote social activity, Kari and her husband appreciated the social contact that existed between their Norwegian neighbours, such as the day before when they had spent time with "the Norwegians in number seven", eating bacalao. The attachment the second home owners made to their neighbours was not hard to see in Buzios Tropical where each homeward journey took a much demonstrated form through their farewells. Each time a neighbour would leave, almost all or at least those that had the most social contact, would gather up at the front entrance a while before those who were going home were taken to the airport. Announcing that everyone could come and say good-bye before they left, most gathered to give hugs and to have a last chat. This was done in much the same way every time someone left. Those who did not have much contact with the neighbours who were leaving would stop by to say good-bye anyway, as this was expected of them as neighbours.

Even though the relations formed through such Norwegian neighbourliness was relatively short-term, such farewells indicated the appreciation of them. It also signified and strengthened the communion formed through such neighbourliness. Marking a temporary neighbourly status, there were often sad farewells. As the relations that were formed in the second home context in Brazil were most often confined to this context, it was not expected that they would interact until the next vacation spent in their second home. Through the dynamic relation between neighbours, a social arena of familiarity allowed

second homes to be developed as a space from where to seek out social activities and withdrawing from it.

### 5.1.3 Norwegians in an Extended Social Circuit

*The communion already starts in the plane on the way down to Brazil, proceeding inside the condominiums, but the contact with other Norwegians also continues at cafés, restaurants, on the bus, internet-café, shops etc; the ones you travel with are often the ones you remember, in addition to your neighbours.<sup>36</sup>*

Participation in a Norwegian community was not one of the initial motivations for ownership. It rather resembled the perceptions of “Syden”, which many wanted to distance themselves from. Nonetheless a Norwegian community existed not only between neighbours, but as a part of an extended social community. Being a Norwegian seemed, by that, to function as a social community when it also extended to Norwegians outside the condominium. “Oh, are there Norwegians here?” said one Norwegian when sitting in his new vacation home as one of the few that had moved into a newly build Norwegian condominium. Playing on own nationality in order to get to know people was not unusual and I was often approached in that manner.

Meeting other Norwegians in malls, on internet cafés, in shops, bars, restaurants and in the general tourist locations happened very often. This had a fleeting character to it as most of these meetings did not extend much further than to a little chat before moving on; a chat that was principally carried out on the basis of being from the same country. Hearing someone in nearby speaking Norwegian, sitting at an internet café while the person next to them was checking out a Norwegian internet sight, or being cramped up in a bus, were all frequent instigators for indulging in a conversation. Overhearing and

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<sup>36</sup> Extract from fieldnotes: ”Samholdet begynner allerede på flyet nedover, og fortsetter innenfor condominiumene, men kontakt med de andre norske som er andre steder fortsetter på kafeer, restauranter, bussen, internett kafeer, butikker etc.: de du reiser med er ofte de du husker, i tillegg til dine naboer.”

often participating in such conversations myself, they worked as a form of information sharing both of issues going on in Norway at the present point, but also about sharing experiences with one another. It seemed important to share advice and recommendations about activities in conversations with other Norwegians. Such conversations were often the beginning and end of a social relation, but it could also invite a continuation of contact, at least if these Norwegians met again on a planned or random occasion.

### *Contact Between Condominiums*

“It is nice to be able to benefit from the experiences made by others, hearing from others where one should go and what they do and adventure here in Brazil”. This declaration made by Johan contains the main characteristic of a communication that took place between Norwegians, besides sharing news from home. Believing that it was possible to gain something through contact with other Norwegians was one of the reasons that such contact was initiated. Several of my informants, in addition to interacting socially with their neighbours, also had social contact with Norwegians from nearby condominiums. The owners occasionally paid visits to other condominiums or participated in conversations when coming across other Norwegian second home owners.

While condominiums were most often regulated spaces that limited visits and kept people without permission from entering, interactions between Norwegians who were not neighbours was most often kept outside the boundary of the condominium. Such places could be where a larger group of tourists and second home owners were located. Eating at restaurants, checking e-mail, taking the bus, going shopping or on arranged tours were all ideal places for socially interacting with other Norwegians. However, many of the new condominiums were built with a restaurant and/or a bar on the premises, thereby allowing such interaction to take place within own condominium also.

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This reduced the need to visit arenas outside the condominium when socially interacting with people in the extended Norwegian community.

Buzios Tropical was one of those condominiums with a restaurant attached to it. That placed the basis for interactions to a greater extent within that condominium. Allowing and even encouraging guests from other surrounding condominiums to use their restaurant enabled closer contact to other Norwegians. Being able to eat at a restaurant while at the same time getting familiar with Norwegians provided great opportunities to socially interact in different condominiums. The flow of Norwegians to such restaurants varied, but it none the less provided an opportunity to establish contact with many second home owners. I found this to be very useful for getting in touch with second home owners from different condominiums when I lived at Buzios Tropical, thus expanding my sources of information.

Creating fleeting and more lasting relations with those in the same condominium took a neighbourly form, but relations were also built with other Norwegians. That is what formed the Norwegian community. Concentrating interactions both within and outside the different condominiums enabled a feeling of belonging that extended to Norwegians within Brazil. As the above quote states, it started at the airport where a feeling of communion was established through being from the same country, heading for the same destination. In the conceptualization of a nation, the established communion was built as much on a sense of national fellowship as the idea of an exclusive cultural distinctiveness. Loyalty and a sense of belonging were evident through the focus upon a sharing of culture which had a root in something familiar, namely nationality. A specific sense of being Norwegian related to a perception of cultural difference that could be seen to appear in the meeting between such cultures. How these meeting worked will be the focus of the remains of this chapter.

## 5.2 Encountering Brazilians

In chapter two, which treated the motivations of second home ownership, one of the ideas put forward was that through owning vacation property in Brazil it could provide the possibility to gain adventures that these owners would not be able to get during a typical holiday to “Syden”. Meeting a community and, gaining a distance to everyday life in Norway, were both strong instigators of such purchases. If, as the above parts shows, the community of Norwegians and the Norwegian neighbourliness were the main social relations formed in the second home context, how did that work in relation to socially interacting with Brazilians, i.e. a local community? That will be answered in this section which treats the Norwegian second home owners’ relations to Brazilians.

### 5.2.1 Perceptions of the Brazilian

Nationality is important in the meeting between cultures in that it plays heavily on the notion of “otherness”. “The stranger” or the “other” has in all cultures and at all times appeared as an element of uncertainty and a threat against the known and the established, the threat being that nothing with him is known, not his social background nor his mindset and intentions (Longva 2003:18). In much the same way, the meetings between cultures were representative for my informants meeting with the “other”, in the form of the exotic “other” Brazilian. Tylor and Bogdan write that “As social actors, we develop shared meanings of objects and people in our lives” (1998:11). If this is true, how can perceptions and meanings of something unknown that is the Brazilian, affect social relations? The social interaction of Norwegians to different groups of individuals will be the main concern in this section. Seeing the Brazilian as a threat could cause Norwegian second home owners to reproduce the self in particular ways in relation to the “other”.



### *Understanding “the Other”*

My informants had particular notions about who the typical Brazilian was and how he acted in relation to other people. Jan-Erik refers to what he sees as the social nature of Brazilians, by comparison to people from Thailand:

We like it a lot in Thailand, [...] people are very nice and very sweet and smiley, but it is a bit more real in Brazil. It is not that static smile that repeats itself all the time. Brazilians smile when they want to. [...] He faces you optimistic and positive and then it's up to yourself how you behave. In Thailand you can almost beat them in the head and they'll stand up and smile anyway. A Brazilian doesn't do that.<sup>o</sup>

Compared to how he found people to be in Thailand, Jan-Erik had an idea of the Brazilian as being more genuine in their contact with others. A human of another culture none the less, but acting in a manner he found natural according to his cultural background. Characterized as optimistic and well-meaning, Brazilians were not that far from the analogy he drew to Thailand, the main difference being that reactions and the ways to behave in Thailand were perceived, by him, to be rather false, whereas in Brazil it was assumed that they acted in a genuine way.

This emphasis on real and genuine ways to interact stands out as one of the key elements in what Anh Nga Longva (2003) describes as particularly Norwegian ways of interacting. In the search for realness, the typical Norwegian sees an exaggerated politeness such as that described in Thailand as an obvious sign of falseness (Longva 2003:16). Being polite in an exaggerated way is considered as a deception, by Norwegians if it is not rooted in an actual experience or co-existence, Longva claims (2003). It could be confused with a wish to take advantage. Brazilians however were according to Jan-Erik and many of my informants, believed to be nice and friendly in their nature but not because they were interested in gaining something from it. As Øyvind described:

[I]t is a totally different atmosphere there and those who speak to you, talk to you because they want to get more friendly with you or be friends with you and not because they wish to sell you something or take advantage of you.<sup>p</sup>

Seeing the Brazilian as being naturally nice in a genuine matter was thereby a perception many of my informants shared. Even so, the belief that the Brazilian had an inherited and genuine attitude came with a premise. This disposition was not something maintained by the Brazilian at all costs. If something was done to jeopardize this positive basis of interactions then it could take on another form. Therefore, it was believed that it was up to the Norwegians themselves to make the most out of such meetings and make the experience a positive one. As Lise describes the imperative of social interaction:

I think it is much of what we make of it. Very much what one make of it. I believe so. Well, of course, when we went to the carnival that night, you meet a lot and see the Brazilian culture. But you're supposed to learn a bit about the culture, before you start going right at it.<sup>9</sup>

This account shows how to behave when interacting with Brazilians. In relation to certain perceptions, even though the wish to socially interact with Brazilians was present, the mere thought was not enough. Being cautious while gaining more knowledge about the Brazilian culture could, building upon Lises description, provide a deeper level of integration with them. As such, it was a common understanding that one should not simply enter into this unknown context without prior knowledge of their ways to behave. It may be that it was considered intimidating not knowing how to relate to people of another culture, even though it was a common perception that Brazilians were of a positive mindset when interacting with others.

The perception of Brazilians as “other” was a part of the determined constitution of exotic experiences with Brazil that seemed to have something to do with the idea that Brazilians were different than the familiar Norwegian and therefore an exciting element to explore. Since it was considered to be up to oneself to make contact and preserve a supposedly good relation between Norwegians and Brazilians, a certain amount of responsibility was placed in the hands of the Norwegian second home owners. It was not just simply to

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enter into social interaction with Brazilian; they had to be modest when facing such a local community. Whether these perceptions and understandings of Brazilians are true or false is not the issue here. What is of importance is that the second home owners sought out, amongst other things experiences not just in adventures but in the experience with people. How such understanding could have an effect on the meetings with Brazilians shall be dealt with in the last part of this chapter. Based on real experiences or mediated conceptions, how did the Norwegian second home owners face Brazilians in a local community? This question will be explored in the next section dealing with the actual encounters with these “others”.

### **5.2.2 Facing the Local Community**

The initial anticipation of spending a vacation in the second home context in co-existence with a local community took a different form in meeting with the local community. The actual contact between Norwegians and Brazilians was of a much lesser degree than what motivated my informants. When encountering the Norwegian second home owners about their contact with a local community, the answers were of a different character. Some were fully aware of the lack of contact, while others claimed to have a good relationship with the Brazilians in their neighbourhood. Having a good relationship to the neighbourhood, however, did not imply there was much contact between them but simply that they did not have any problems with one another. By that, some of my informants gave the impression that the relationship to a local community could be described as a harmonious one.

#### ***Encounters***

Establishing a good relation to the surroundings of the second home was something that could be done in many ways. The encounters that took place between Norwegians and their non-tourist surroundings ranged from a simple nodding to improvised conversations, manoeuvring oneself to a certain

understanding. There seemed to be rare occasions where Norwegians would socially interact with Brazilians, mostly because social interaction took place within the Norwegian condominium. Most Brazilians did not have access to that location due to strict visitation regulations for those other than Norwegian second home owners. Some were allowed entrance, but they were those Brazilians with a work relation to the condominium.

According to size, the amount of people hired to work on a condominium varied. In most of the condominiums in Buzios which were fairly large, the hired help mostly consisted of a married couple that acted as caretakers (janitor and housemaid), a gardener, and one or two security guards, all of Brazilian nationality. If there was a bar or restaurant present in these facilities, they were mostly contracted and managed by a firm which rented space from the housing cooperative. Those who worked in these condominiums constituted the main contact Norwegian second home owners had with Brazilians. In Buzios Tropical the couple that acted as caretakers lived inside the condominium, in a small house or shack behind the buildings. Almost considered to be a part of the cooperative, they had contact with the Norwegians in their second homes, both during and after work hours. As they lived in the same condominium most of the second home owners had formed a relation to them, in one way or another. In Buzios there was not much local contact besides that, because most of its original inhabitants had moved out of the area leaving room for a Norwegian community to flourish<sup>37</sup>. Many of the locals in referral by my informants were actually those who made their living out of serving the second home owners. Their services were provided by part of a local community, and thus constituted what my informants saw as a local community. A work relationship where the locals served the Norwegian

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<sup>37</sup> This was mostly due to a sell-out of Brazilian property and because the prices were much higher in the areas with a greater concentration of tourists and second home owners. The local community did not have the opportunity to live in the same areas as the Norwegian community, not even those who made a living out of such tourism.

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second home owners made Brazilians appear smiling and led them to be perceived as positive to the arriving Norwegians. I am not here claiming that they were not, but simply suggesting that the work relation sat out a need for a positive attitude. After all, their personal economy was much affected by the Norwegians willingness to spend money.

The places where encounters could take place between Norwegians and locals were at the nearby restaurants, small grocery stores and at the beach. However, contact was initiated mostly with the workers at the restaurants and the grocery stores. Since very few Brazilians were able to speak English, those who were able to interact in some form were appreciated for their ability to communicate by some words rather than signs. Because they were easier to relate to, some owners had more or less regular contact with these restaurant owners, indulging in quick chats. Others showed their appreciation through a certain form of loyalty. The Norwegians would swear by specific restaurants and grocery stores where they were able to communicate, even if it was only through a few words. These places were chosen due to their interest in communicating despite language barriers.<sup>38</sup> Encounters with Brazilians not working in the tourist industry, however, were minimal.

Believing that a simple nod or a smile counted as social interactions for the second home owners could hint that it was not in fact the communication by words or the time spent that was of significance. Rather it was the actual *encounters* with Brazilians that were vital. This was the actuality with Sigbjørn who proclaimed to have a good relationship with the local Brazilians as he usually passed them on his run along the beaches of Buzios, greeting or nodding his head towards them as a way of saying hello. In general, it seemed that simply meeting locals was significant to Norwegians, even if not many words were uttered.

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<sup>38</sup> More of the effect of language upon social interaction further down.

### *Leisure Time and Efforts of Communication*

Making contact with a Brazilian community was hard work, at least when not speaking the same language or being of the same culture. Communication turned into a form of effort and as already shown, work was not something sought out in the second home setting. As tiring as it was making contact with a local community, it seemed even more tiring to uphold such relations.

Employing a safe interaction with those within the Norwegian community would be more convenient, and more importantly not conflict with the idea to spend free time *freely* in the second home context. Liv, one of the second home owners in Buzios Tropical had a relatively close contact with Maria, the housemaid and general caretaker of the condominium. Having been invited with her husband to attend several gatherings with Maria and her family and friends, Liv considered this to be a relatively tiring activity. She stated that she was very happy that she was invited and that she was lucky to be able to participate more with a local community. However this “luck” was not so highly valued at all times: “It’s nice to be invited and all that”, Liv says, “but it’s so tiring”.

Liv had attended some of the birthdays and parties that she had been invited to but confided to both Lise and me that she was not so comfortable with these gatherings. She told us that both she and her husband were stuck with each other as they did not have anyone to talk to or who could understand them at these parties. When they found that it took so much energy in the attempt to communicate, these invitations presented themselves as mere objects of obligation rather than of excitement. Claiming that it took a lot of energy to try to understand, the frustration of not being understood or to understand became of such great duty to Liv and her husband that they tried to avoid these invitations all together. Wary of such efforts of communication, she tried her best not to run into Maria, and had to make up excuses for not accepting an invitation. She was very clear about the fact that she wanted to be in control of

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her own vacation, spending it in exactly the way that she wished, by stating: “I cannot let her decide my leisure time. I need to relax too!”

The relationship to Maria was not so hard to maintain as she spoke some English words. However, when trying to communicate to her friends, thereby moving beyond the sphere where most of the people around were of the same nationality, it became all the more stressful. Not being able to relax and enjoy her holiday made it necessary for Liv to cut down on the contact with Maria, in the risk of being placed in a situation where she did not feel comfortable. In the second home setting, being able to spend time as they wished themselves was of crucial importance and became one of the main objectives for spending time away from home. Doing activities that were most comfortable did not include making a huge effort in trying to understand someone and in return being understood. Leisure time in the second home setting was therefore about being able to decide over one’s own free time and spending that time more freely. This goes to show how tiring such relations may seem to those Norwegians who try to initiate and follow up on it. Being able to participate at parties and social gatherings worked best if there were people of different nationalities there. This was something recognized by the Norwegian company which arranged a few gatherings where both Norwegians and Brazilians could participate. Olav had participated in a happening as that, and portray it as a much positive event in the following way:

[T]here was a barbecue party over at Arituba Tropical [a Norwegian condominium nearby] and they had invited everyone who worked on the condominium so we had a barbecue party at the beach. [...] We did not get to talk [to them], but at least we were able to communicate that we wanted to spend time with them [...] then they may feel a sense of belonging, and there were a lot of them there so they could talk to each other and we too. It does not form any type of anxiety towards it, you might say.<sup>r</sup>

It was a great initiative for the Norwegian second home owners as they could be with Norwegians, while at the same time spending time with Brazilians. Arranging for interactions to take place within secure frames, it could allow

for more lasting relationships to form, but that would only be if an effort was made towards fulfilling this initial wish.

### **5.2.3 Meaningful Encounters**

Meetings between Norwegians and the local communities that surrounded the condominiums apparently took place on a much rarer and occasional scale than first anticipated. Whereas the Norwegian second home owners had frequent social interactions with each other, the communication and interactions with Brazilians were present to a lesser degree. Still, the rare presence of meetings were often referred to and spoken about. When the actual contact with a local community was so scarce, what made it relevant through such encounters?

The stories about individual encounters with a local community were told over and over again, as they seemed much appreciated events for the Norwegians that I talked with. My main informant Lise, whom I have referred to on several occasions, was invited with her family to visit a Brazilian family. Having met with the owner at the local restaurant several times he took them home one evening, to his house that was located about one hour further inland in Rio Grande do Norte. There they enjoyed a meal and were given the possibility of spending some time together with his family. Lise's husband Johannes speaks gratefully of this encounter:

We experienced the hospitality that was there and [...] when we came in we were offered food, it was not much else there that they could offer perhaps, because they are poor, but to offer a shower if they have that then they would do that. And after you have eaten you find a hammock and lie down. It does not cost much, but it shows what they have to offer there and they appreciate that you do that. Even if they don't mean it a hundred percent out of their soul since you may be spending all of their water or such, or taking the bed of someone else, but because they cannot offer anything else than at least they offer that, as a gesture and that is very nice. They offer a piece of themselves.<sup>s</sup>



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Even though they were not able to understand each other in a very profound way due to amongst other things language differences, the aim of the visit was instead to participate in the life that many Brazilians lead, even if it was only for one night. Seeing their ways of living was crucial to the feeling of having experienced something out of the ordinary. This was an experience that was characterized as more adventurous than the usual encounters and was, as such, a highly appreciated one. A focus such as this - wanting to experience something more when visiting the second home, and through that gaining a special experience by contact with the local community - was not exclusive to Lise and her family. Many others weighed such experiences heavily and although there were rare encounters and many of them short ones, they were nevertheless used for what they were worth, and told over and over again. These stories were also brought back to the first home setting, and told as a part of the adventures they had experienced within the second home setting. I was often told the same stories during interviews and conversations, both when conducting my pre-study and when present in the second home context. These stories meant a lot to the second home owners that I spoke with. Being allowed to attend and in a way, even for a brief moment becoming a part of their everyday lives, constituted events that would outlast the actions itself.

The wish to integrate and communicate with a local community was not always evident when faced with the challenges that such communication posed. What had early on appeared as a huge part of motivations, seeking out an adventurous vacation, changed with the use of the second home. Still, the rare interactions that took place between locals and my informants were greatly appreciated by my informants and moreover, something highly wished for. As Lars pointed out, what is remembered and valued when travelling are the encounters with local communities and the experiences to be gained from such adventures. He remembered from his travels to the Spanish speaking parts of South America that “the greatest thing we remembered from that was when we came close to the local community or got to know people”. It was

not only getting to know people and doing things together, but also the feeling to “become a part of it, that they recognize and greet you and become a part of the society when visiting”. This was the content of the appreciation for Lars, but also for my informants wish to be able to participate in meaningful encounters. Encounters could also provide an element of reflection as presented with the initial motivation for second home ownership, and by that these meetings were even greater appreciated.

### *Reflecting through Observation*

Hilde was one of those Norwegians that claimed that she learned a lot through various encounters with Brazilians. The meetings were first and foremost functional in that they enabled a reflection of own life in the everyday context at home; it made it possible for her to appreciate the things she had at home. Fredrik postulated, as shown in Chapter 2, that the visit to his second home in Sagi presented him with a more nuanced picture of the material objects that we surround ourselves with. The same was the case for Hilde. Mostly the observable things along with the stories shared by others played a part in this reflexive process, as she was not able to communicate with the local community in the way she could with other Norwegians. As the observable facts and most notable differences were the material objects, it was the material conditions they lived under that made Hilde, Lars, Fredrik, Hans, Lise, Silje and many others reflect upon their own lives back home. There were certain things felt by the Norwegians to be necessities, which Brazilians did not have, and things that surrounded them every day that Brazilians did fine without. Such observable lessons were something that could be reflected upon through the rare, but meaningful encounters with an average Brazilian.

### **5.2.4 Language and It's Significance for Social Interactions**

One of the reasons for not interacting with locals on a more frequent basis was in many regards the language barrier. If the second home owners were only

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able to communicate with a local community through signs, using arms and body language and not through words, it can be claimed that the social interaction between Norwegians and Brazilians were on a rather superficial level. Understanding only partly what was said and done made the attempt to pursue such social interactions difficult and at least exhausting for both parties. “A language is a dialect backed by an army”, Eriksen claims (2002:103), pointing towards the political significance of a nation state using language as a signifier for nationality. Language for my informants was indeed an important matter that extended beyond political significance. As I have pointed out, none of my informants, with one or two exceptions, spoke Portuguese and it was not hard to imagine its significance for interactions in that matter. All of the people I talked with pointed to the importance of learning Portuguese in order to communicate with others and most uttered that they were willing to learn. This was however, not a priority.

A general assumption made by my informants was that it would be hard to learn the language, for various reasons. Some felt that they were too old to learn something new; others could find the time neither at home nor during vacations. It was a common perception that in order to learn, one had to be present in Brazil over a longer period of time to get a practical use of Portuguese, but very few had the possibility to spend such an amount of time in Brazil. Thus, the hope to learn Portuguese appeared as a utopian dream for most. Even so, the wish to learn Portuguese was there, as was most certainly the awareness of the necessity to learn in order to communicate. Still, when time and the ability to do so were not sufficient, most of those I talked to did not know more Portuguese than a few phrases that enabled ordering a meal at a local restaurant.

The efforts that were made by Brazilians to be understood were found to be quite pointless by the way it was often done. In Sagi there was a woman from the local community who had her job in the Norwegian condominium,

washing clothes and cleaning rooms. She would often talk a lot to the Norwegians present, but not much of what she said was understood. When she wanted to pass on information or when information was passed on to her she would react in the same way by continuing talking in Portuguese, probably hoping to eventually be understood. One of the second home owners at this condominium expressed her frustration over this Brazilian woman's attempt to handle such situations; "Even though I do not understand a word they are saying they still continue talking!" This resulted in different misunderstandings, although not of a severe types, but it still shows how an attempt to communicate may be unsuccessful even in an attempt to form an understanding.

This could, however have more severe consequences when owners had hired local help to make changes in the second home, making more important decisions in matters that required a certain amount of knowledge in the Portuguese language. The way to solve such situations was to hire a translator, so that the second home owners could keep the vacation as primarily a vacation, without having to arrange practical things. In the second home context, the importance of language mostly came into play during everyday situations. While driving around doing some sightseeing and shopping with some of my informants, one of them outlined the advantage of speaking Portuguese, by stating: "Imagine if we were able to speak Portuguese, then we could simply ask for the way to that florist!" Instead we ended up returning to our condominium without fresh flowers.

### *Who Is to Learn What?*

If language was the main obstacle to social interactions, then who should learn what? It might seem obvious to many that when visiting or temporarily residing in another country, that those who make such moves should learn the local language. Many of the second home owners even pointed to the fact that when we welcomed foreign residents into Norway it was with the demand that

they learned Norwegian, and likewise should they as Norwegian learn Portuguese. This, however, was not an easy task or a statement that was followed up on. It was a common perception that the most convenient would be if Brazilians learned English. In that way, one of many informants said, it would be easier for them to communicate with most of the tourists now that tourism was becoming an increasing phenomenon in the area. They have only recently started teaching English at schools in Brazil, so the younger generation will grow up knowing more of English than the past generations<sup>39</sup>. Those fortunate enough to know a bit English were hugely sought after by Norwegians hoping to interact with a local community. The wish and attempt to learn were awarded, making communication easier for both parties, although the learning aspect was put in the hands of the Brazilian.

This was also true for the implementation of a few Norwegian words here and there, provided by some of the owners. Although many saw the irony of teaching Norwegian to Brazilians in Brazil, it was nevertheless done on a relatively active scale. The most evident example was the grocery store worker who was given a Brazilian-Norwegian/Norwegian-Brazilian dictionary from one of the second home owners. This, he said, enabled her to recognize what Norwegians wanted when they went shopping for food. It also made the Norwegians able to look up food-related terms that they were not able to communicate during shopping. Through this, the grocery store employee had learned a few Norwegian words that made it possible for her to understand what they were looking for. She had also been given a list of groceries in Norwegian that she had been taught the meaning of so that “whenever we enter the shop she brings out the list asking if we need egg, milk and such”. Jan-Erik was very happy with that arrangement and apparently so were other second home owners, as that store was the most used grocery store by

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<sup>39</sup> With the presumption that most of the younger generation would in fact go to school and could afford doing so.

Norwegians in the area. It would seem as though there was more willingness from the Brazilians to learn a foreign language in order to understand than there was willingness for foreigners to learn Portuguese. This might be because these Brazilians I refer to here were those who made a living out of this type of settlement. Understanding that it paid off to learn a few phrases made it worth the effort.

The question of who is to learn what could therefore seem to be: 1) a practical one that depended on to what extent they wished to participate in the Brazilian local community that existed outside the second home context, and 2) a moral one, related to how they felt ideally that a visitor should adapt to the host country. Although the lack of language abilities dominated the Norwegian second home owners' social interaction to a local community, it did not seem as either the practical nor would the moral question be enough to ensure them to learn Portuguese. In that, it could be claimed that the Norwegian company and other mediators played their role, as the second home owners in question were not forced into learning when help was often nearby. The establishment of a Norwegian community did not pose the owners to take the time to learn as it was mainly needed once they stepped out of that community, and as shown in this chapter; that was not done very often. It seems, by that, as the Norwegian second home settlement in Brazil worked without specific language skills. Especially when social interaction was mainly sought among that of familiar nature, being those from the same country and having the same cultural baggage.

### **Concluding Remarks: Meetings of Fleeting and Lasting Character**

Whereas Norwegians in general seek more lasting relations through enduring and genuine interactions (Longva 2003), the social interactions that existed between a local community of Brazilians and Norwegians was not enough to form such lasting relations. Despite the emphasis on the meetings with locals and experiences with Brazilians and their ways of life, it seemed nevertheless

that such relations were fleeting by character. The establishment of neighbourly relations with other second home owners was the only social interaction that took place which had a more lasting form. Speaking the same language and being a part of the same culture constituted something familiar for the owners. Therefore, social interaction within the Norwegian community made up most of the relations in the second home context. In this setting, it was the Brazilians who were viewed as strangers, even when operating within their own country.

In meeting with Brazilians, speaking the same language seemed to be of great importance. This could be viewed as an ultimate marker that placed the familiar against the unfamiliar and marked social interactions in particular ways. Ideas of the stranger or “the other” were a notion comprehended on a collective scale where the social community of Norwegians worked as a barrier against “the other”. Establishing certain elements of familiarity, in particular the implementation of traditional traits and the play upon nationality, founded the second home as a safe platform in which to base interactions upon. This familiar platform could work as an element of safety where the meetings with “the other” would be contrasted and kept at a distance, making it less of a threat in the name of uncertainty.

## **6. Keeping the Known Close and the Unknown at a Distance**

In this final chapter I shall conceptualize and build upon many of the empirical findings I have presented during this text. From the constructed ideas of owning a vacation property, to the nature of social interactions in the second home context, it is possible to recognize how the establishment of second homes was constructed. By revealing the specific function that second homes managed to produce in the space of safe and unsafe elements, this function was one that separated the use of second homes from other types of consumption and tourism. While the first part of this chapter deals with how second home owners socially interacted in a way that kept the known close and the unknown at a distance, the last parts treat how being safe worked as the most important establisher of second homes. If the known and the unknown are seen as opposites, then how may the second home settlement contain two such conflicting concepts? This chapter answers this question building upon concepts that enabled the known to take place within the unknown.

### **6.1 The Unknown at a Distance**

The construction of second homes and of oneself as a second home owner happened in a realm of the known, in the form of a transfer of traditional elements and social constructions of a Norwegian community. More so, it was the result of a relationship to the “other”, e.g. the unknown Brazilian. When understanding Brazilians as a people in opposition to oneself through specific conceptions of nationality and culture, it was something that produced a believed difference between the known and the unknown. This again had an effect in the way in which the owners kept the known and the unsafe at a distance. Taking the social interactions, or lack thereof between Norwegians



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and Brazilians into account, it would seem as if such cultural differences were more of a perceived character rather than of lived experience. An objective description of culture and nationality has not been the issue at hand in this thesis. Whether or not the perceived cultural differences were something that in fact stemmed from particular experiences with this “other” were as such not particularly relevant. As most of my informants saw culture to be something people *had* of difference *between* themselves as being of different nationalities, the perceived notions of such differences were of significance in meetings between Brazilians and Norwegians.

### 6.1.1 Culture and Difference

“Since culture is nothing but a way to describe human behaviour it would follow that there are discrete groups of people [...] to correspond to each culture” (Barth 1994:9). Following this, it seems right to state that with each nationality comes a specific culture. When I asked what my informants would describe as the cultural traits of Brazil or what they meant when they claimed that Norwegians and Brazilians were of different culture, I was often given an answer that referred to the fact that people were different and that was that. As Christel, a second home owner in her fifties stated; “there is a difference between Brazilians and foreigners [Norwegians]”. Not revealing what it was that made them different from each other, it was simply assumed that being from another nation meant that people had different attitudes and ways of behaving. The second home owners were therefore active participants in ascribing different nationalities with specific cultural traits. Since Brazilians were by my informants believed to be of different characters which made it harder for the owners to relate to them, the Norwegian second home owners I talked with felt that it would be favourable to share a condominium with those of the same nationality.

I point to nationality as the foundation for what it was that constituted this difference for the Norwegian second home owners. For them, the identity connected to being a Norwegian established a specific form of being: We are Norwegians because we are something other than the foreigners (Eriksen 2003:58). This was a construction that was both established *and* maintained in the second home context with the meeting of a constituted “other”. The “other”, being of another nationality therefore represented the difference believed to lie between cultures.

### *A Relational Character*

“They have their history and we have ours, they have their traditional food and we have ours, they have their territory and we have ours, they have their folk music and we have ours” and finally “they have their culture and we have ours” (Eriksen 2003:58, my translation). This kind of complementary justification of differences makes it possible to understand what type of elements constitute the variation between nations and points to the nature of differences that could exist between members of different nationalities.

Thomas H. Eriksen speaks of how it is *relations* which create and maintain ethnicity, and that ethnicity could not be made evident in itself without this relational condition (2003). When interacting with others through the characteristic of belonging to a certain group, specific boundaries are created and by that form a part of one’s identity. In much the same way, the focus upon cultural differences in the second home context could be seen as a way to define such borders of nationality. The notion of difference which was maintained in meetings and made evident in the relations that were formed was a key thread throughout the Norwegian settlement in Brazil.

In order to be Norwegian and form a Norwegian community in Brazil, Brazilians were necessary. Believing that Brazilians were essentially different was important in order for the community of Norwegians to subsist. As one of the Norwegian second home owners said, “You know – the Nordic and the

Tropical are two different cultures”. Through the characteristic of being from two distinctly different geographical regions it was believed that it followed with distinctly different cultures. Thus, it was not only the physical borders that decided the distance between them; an assumption of the nature of culture also worked well in limiting social interactions. What were upheld as cultural differences and passed on through various actors in the Norwegian community had effects on how the owners related to a perceived different other. These cultural differences were differences in which people were convinced of their existence (Eriksen 2003:55). The perceptions of such differences played by that a significant part in social interactions. If these differences in fact existed apart from the idea of them were as such not relevant.

Blurring borders of culture and nationality could be said to be what hold groups together through specific representations and ideas. In Brazil, it was the maintenance of a Norwegian community based on being Norwegians in Brazil that worked as a general form of distinction. The divide between “us” and “them” became evident when meeting with people of different nationalities, and functioned as a set of socially regulative assumptions. This blocked my informants’ ability to see the individual variations that existed within such a diverse country as Brazil. Thus, it became regulative in that it predetermined how to relate to the “other”.

### **6.1.2 The “Other”**

The idea of the “other” has in most regards been viewed as a way to construct a notion of the self on the background of a contrasting other person or group. Edward Said (2004) dealt with this in his critique of the western and European conceptualization of the Orient. Orientalism, he claimed, was a way of thinking which established the Orient in an oppositional relation to the Occident in matters deciding specific appearances, thoughts, personalities and experiences (Said 2004). This is easily transferable to the notion that

nationality would be constitutive for a cultural opposition that specifically characterized the “other”. The collective understanding of *us* Europeans in opposition to *them* non-European that Denys Hay set forth with his conceptualization of the European idea (1968) was something that in light of the perceived cultural differences founded a notion of *the* “other”. This way of dealing with differences while defining oneself as a member of a particular group could be seen as related to how my informants recounted themselves in an unknown context. Being curious and seeking out this “other” – in this case Brazilians - while at the same time holding on to their own identity as Norwegians, worked as something that could allow a second home to be established in Brazil.

In the second home setting in Brazil certain assumptions relating to perceived differences regulated the Norwegian owners’ interactions with Brazilians. This interaction was considered to be an enduring practice, which would take more of the leisure time than my informants could afford. The “other” became an unknown element that was held at a distance, but nevertheless one that the second home owners had strong perceptions and ideas of. Thus, the relationship to the “other” could be treated as a main relation, even if the Norwegian owners and Brazilians were socially interacting with each other or not. Establishing a distinction of “us” in relation to “them” created a distance that worked as a way for the owners to seek out different adventures than those experienced close to home.

“Interest in the stranger is a universal trait”, Margaret Wood claimed (1934:17) and it was this exact interest that seemed to make up the risk and adventures that my informants sought out, when motivated to acquire a vacation property in Brazil. Many quotes could be set forth to further conceptualize my informants understanding of the “other” and their wish to experience some of their different culture. The most telling of them are as follows: “In a way it is much more exotic, people are very different in regard

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to culture and such”, “I want to experience the real Brazilian culture”, “Here [in Brazil], it is still very untouched and I think that this draws up [the experience]. Feeling as if you are somewhere distant”, and finally; “when you’re on vacation it is nice to meet with other cultures and don’t feel as if you could just as well be sitting in a cafe in Oslo when you are in Brazil”. These perceptions of what the purchase of a second home could provide, promotes particular notions of the “other” as exciting, unknown elements possible to explore on a chosen basis. It was nevertheless an element that upheld the notion of cultural difference. Also, it seemed to fix the category of Brazilians into an “otherness”.

Believing that the cultural nature of Brazilians was something constant, something which inhabited true ways of being, was apparent through several of the descriptions made by my informants of Brazil and Brazilians. Searching for a different experience in the representation of Brazilians as something other, it worked as a way to classify them as something more exotic and by that unknown as opposed to a familiar European culture. An imagery of the possibilities to form a closer relation to the exotic “other” was thus a contributing factor that restrained what the owners expected to find through meeting Brazilians. Establishing closeness to those of the same cultural entity, the Norwegian second home owners formed a specific distance to those who did not belong to the same community. As such, it worked as a way to keep what was known closest to oneself and what was unfamiliar at a more distant range. The “other” was therefore not just a term which signified what they were *not* but it directed the forms of relationships and ways of acting when related to that other.

## 6.2 The Known Closer

Different ways of acting, conscious or not, that enable the second home owner to feel safe within an unknown context were of major relevance when keeping

the known close and the unknown at a distance. People everywhere and at all times have sought out the safe, which has both been filled with risks and opportunities, but nevertheless worked as an attempt to establish predictability, belonging and continuity (Eriksen 2006:11). But what constitutes this safety, and what made it relevant? This will be answered in this part that deals with the known and familiar that was held closest by my informants.

### **6.2.1 An Issue of Safety**

In order to maintain the concept of “safe”, an oppositional relation to safety was constructed. Just as they identified as a Norwegian in opposition to the cultural other Brazilian, the idea of “unsafe” worked as a threat against the known and the established. One such uncertainty was placed with the element of investment through the placement of money. The owners were unfamiliar with what to expect out of an ownership in such a far away location, thus the comfort in knowing that they were not alone helped to minimize the feeling of taking risks. Seeking out the experience of others enabled a sense of safety to emerge while at the same time it functioned as a feeling of security that came with increased knowledge from a mediated experience.

In the establishment of a second home, certain elements were crucial for the vacation property to properly function as a *home*. Not feeling a sense of belonging to the Brazilian society, my informants directed a placement of such belonging in the second home and in the community of Norwegians. Eriksen stated that the subjective unsafety may be much stronger than the objective (2006:13). It did not matter whether the Brazilian society was in fact unsafe; it was enough that it provided a feeling of unsafeness for the second home owners. As Longva (2003) state that “the other” had nothing known to him, the unsafe element could reveal itself in the second home context as a threat against the established familiarity. When at the same time “his social

background or his mindset and intentions” (Longva 2003:18) were also of unknown character, the unsafe could appear as intimidating and at least work as an obstacle for communication. *Unsafety* therefore stood for a culture and a way to organize civil society that did not contain the same elements as my informants saw themselves a part of through the Norwegian community. Wanting to get closer to such other ways of being could involve taking a risk, but not a risk that should be made upon the expense of feeling safe. Drawing upon known elements in something perceived as risky would allow for a second home to be established within a familiar zone and for that of unknown character to be placed further from the owners.

### *Safety in the Known*

Wishing to form a zone of safety in the second home context was something that my informants attempted to shape when implementing familiar representations within an unknown realm. Even though they were not always explicit and easily recognizable representations of safety, it was made visible through constructions and reconstructions of life in the second home context. Placing trust in their close surroundings, establishing social relations of a more lasting character and second homes were as such constructions that could enable a form of security both to be made and maintained. Safety, thereby, worked as a constitution for the Norwegian second home owners, one in which a platform was formed that made it possible to relate both to what was familiar and what was more unfamiliar to them

Relating to how safety was formed through the familiarity of known elements within the home, the emergence of the second home as a base for interaction became apparent early in the fieldwork. Shaping a home away from home through an idea of a safe haven seemed important in order for the second home to feel like *home*. The second home owners drew upon traditions and known ways to organize a housing cooperative in a condominium exclusively inhabited by Norwegians. This enabled elements of a known character to form

within the threatening Brazilian society. Adding a personal touch to the home can thereby be seen not only as a touch, but more a constituent part of being *Norwegian*. When applying this as a main form of familiarity, the emergence of a feeling of safety came from socially interacting and creating relations mainly to other Norwegians. At the heart of social relations lay the second home as a base and starting point for interactions. As the second home was a starting point for interactions, and a mere cradle for familiarity, this was where the second home owners withdrew *to*, and *from* which they sought out the “other”. The second home was by that a point of departure from which all action was carried out. In that way the Norwegian vacationers’ second homes in Brazil kept the known close and the unknown at a distance. To take a closer look at what this implied directly for the second home owners and their surroundings in the context, the next part will present how the social interaction revealed certain circles of interaction.

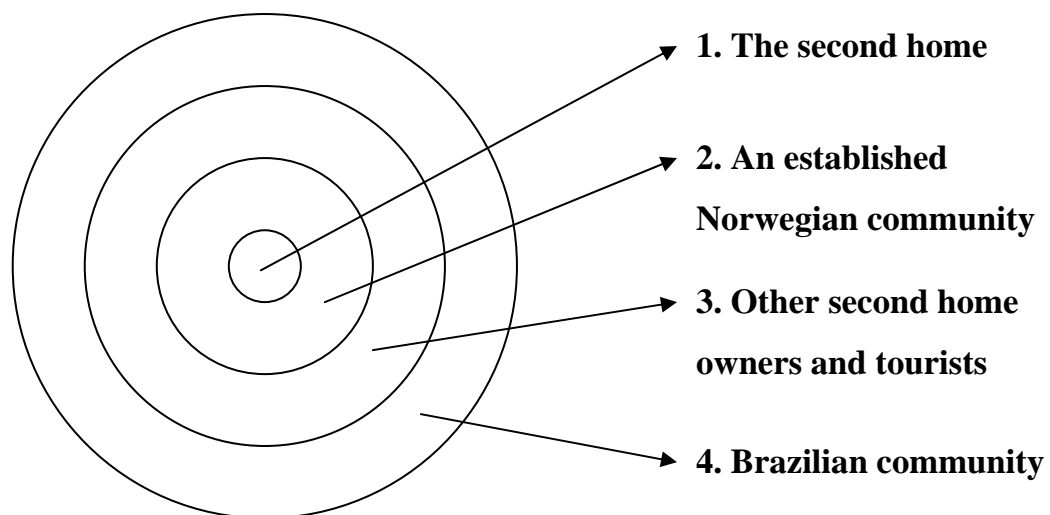
### 6.3 Circling Relations

When my informants connected much less to Brazilians than what they initially anticipated, it would seem to be a consequence of how they kept the unknown at a distance through dealing primarily with those of the same cultural and geographical entity. Starting from the initiation of a purchase, where different social channels were used to achieve a certain amount of safety in the action about to be performed, safety was something actively sought out throughout this whole consumption practice. How social interactions worked as a reflection of the relationship between the safe and unsafe will be described here. That is done in order to take a closer look at how the known was held close and in what way the unknown worked best at a distance for the second home owners.



### 6.3.1 Circles of Interactions

The relations that were formed and what groups the owners socially interacted with in the second home context could be seen mainly divided between three large groups: Norwegians in a community, second home owners along with tourists in general, and the Brazilian society. As a second home owner one may flow from one of these groups to the next in various degrees, most often entering on the characteristic of being a foreigner. These different groupings illustrated a way to socially organise oneself in the second home context. Although I have addressed most such meetings on a more detailed degree previously, the intention here is part of the greater ambition of this thesis. I will discuss how as a second home owner, one could get close to something unfamiliar, while also maintaining a certain distance from it. The circles of interactions as presented in Figure 2 should provide a useful infrastructure which emphasize and show in an illustrative way, the closeness and distance based in the second home and its owners.



**Figure 2: Diagram of circles of interactions**

Figure 2 shows a circling of the social interactions and the different groupings that the owners could move in and out of in the second home context. It

suggests a mapping of a social system that was revealed when dealing with the social interactions that took place in this setting. Referring to social systems as a set of social relations that are made relevant through regular interactions (Eriksen 1998:90), circling interaction in the present way works as an act towards signalling the importance of cultural traits supposedly present in and between its actors. These different levels of social groupings and possible arenas for social interactions were not numbered randomly. They signify in what succession social interactions were mostly played out in the second home context. The circles of interactions represent most of all, a scale of relations connected by closeness and distance to the familiarity of my informants second home.

Different circles represent different arenas where interactions took place and recognize those which are most frequently in use. Circles ranked from the inside to the outside suggest groups and social arenas where the most social interactions took place. Located in the eye of the circle is the second home from where all interactions of the owner were based. This was the place where my informants had established a feeling of home and where most familiar objects were located. The next circle represents the Norwegian community where the second home owners most frequently interacted. Consisting of own condominium first and foremost, this was where a specific Norwegian neighbourliness could be found. Relating to other second home owners and tourists, however, was done on a rarer basis. Still, my informants identified themselves with other second home owners and tourists, as they shared a common trait of being foreigners in Brazil. The interaction with other Europeans at beaches, restaurants, and other social arenas was greater than with Brazilians, because these other foreigner were viewed as closer to home and to their own culture. It was more likely that the owners would find something in common with them than with Brazilians, who are located in the outer circle of the diagram. Since the familiar were formed in these two inner circles, they made up the safest and most known arenas. As the Norwegians

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shared the same nationality and were able to relate to known traditions, a safe zone was formed here.

While the two inner circles represent that which has been built in light of the known and the safe, the two outer circles on the other hand represent different sections of the second home setting. Having little or no contact with those who participated in these circles and not moving frequently within these arenas they were still important to the Norwegian second home owners. The general tourist was not so recognizably separated from the second home owners by my informants, but they were often talked about and the meetings between them were much valued when a communication with them was possible. In much the same way and even more was the appreciation of meetings with the Brazilians in the outermost layer. Even though the Norwegian second home owners integrated to a minimal extent with Brazilians, it was nevertheless the most appreciated, as we have seen. Still, the Brazilian community was not the most sought out of the social arenas. Having dealt with many of the explanation for that in chapter five, what is worth adding is the characterization of the Brazilian local community as the most unfamiliar zone for social interaction. This outer layer represented otherness and by that it was an area where specific assumptions concerning cultural difference were placed. It is this that held the relations with Brazilians at a distance for the second home owners, while at the same time it established the second home as a base from which to interact. A construction of second homes as a base will be treated further in the next section.

## 6.4 Second Homes as a Base - Close by Distance

How could the establishment of second homes provide a feeling of safety while at the same time claiming to provide a special form of experience? In this part I am aiming towards showing how the second home as a base functioned as a mediator between two ideals, which at the same time as they

seem conflicting could be what made the establishment of second homes in Brazil so successful for the Norwegian second home owners.

#### **6.4.1 Risks and Possibilities**

If “adventures are experiences that occur beyond the humdrum of everyday life” (Gordon 2006:4) and adventures occur in the typically “non-normal places” (Gordon 2006:4), one could expect to find elements in the second home context of unknown character which represented a certain element of risk. How the second home owners based safety had a connection with a wish to be open and to seek out an excitement in the unknown. At the same time, they did not want to choose between being safe or not being safe. Excluding the feeling of safety was thereby not an option, as the second home base provided my informants with a way to get both safety and adventure.

Risks were, in a sense, exchanged for opportunities. Many saw the possibilities of experiencing Brazilian culture as a way that could provide them with opportunities to seek out what was indeed unknown. The opportunity to circle through the social arenas that were of unknown character was aspects that seemed to make these visits to the second home so attractive. Assuming that one could be a part of a Brazilian culture and live in close contact with Brazilians played a huge part. Even if not on a permanent basis, knowing that such an adventure could take place at least once a while was sufficient. Believing that the opportunity was present was, by that, often more valuable than the action taken to fulfil such a wish.

Having the second home function as a *base* enabled a freedom from choosing whether or not to be safe in an unknown context. It functioned as a way to seek out the unknown and the adventure of something different, while at the same time providing an ability to withdraw to the comforts of one’s own *home*. Eriksen claim that “the price of safety may be the loss of freedom” (Eriksen 2006:19, my translation), however, the establishment of the second

home as a base from which it was possible to have it all, proves Eriksens statement otherwise. Instead of taking away their freedoms, creating a second home that was perceived to be safe provided my informants *with* freedom: A freedom to choose themselves what to do and in what arenas to participate. This implied not only a freedom *from* choice, but also a freedom *of* choice; choosing when to participate and with what social groups. The elements of choice are of crucial importance, as what many second home owners pointed to: there were so many possibilities present when owning a second home in Brazil. An adventurous aspect of a visit to the second home proved thereby not to involve risk as much as it provided possibilities.

#### **6.4.2 To Seek Out and Withdraw**

The element of safety played a huge part in the creation of second homes as a base for interactions, and a place from which to seek out the familiar in an unknown Brazilian society. Withdrawal was first and foremost about culture, not as in the typical Norwegian cottage where several of my informants saw nature and the sometimes harsh environment as an element they needed to be sheltered from. If the Brazilian community got too dominating during the second home owners adventurous vacation, than the possibility to withdraw from it was used. Either they withdrew to the familiarities of a Norwegian community and Norwegian condominium, or they withdrew altogether from social arenas. This was seen with Kirsten's withdrawal from the celebrated birthday in Buzios Tropical and with Liv's escape from Maria's continuing invitations. When the pressure to participate in diverse social arenas conflicted with the wish to spend a quiet, effortless vacation, the reaction was often withdrawal.

The very nature of spending an effortless vacation may well seem to collide with the wish to experience an adventurous vacation. However, if it is possible to get both during the visit to the second home, why choose? Keeping the

second home as a base allowed the second home owner the ability to actively seek out experiences with another culture as well as a chance to socially interact within a zone of familiarity where they could spend time with their neighbours. In the midst of this, the second home allowed its owners to take a step back and gain a sort of breathing space both from a Brazilian society and a Norwegian community. Thus, the second home provided a shelter from the differences in another culture and the familiarity of known culture and nationality. Related to this concept of freedom Torill stated when we talked about the importance of relating to a Brazilian community: “I find it charming because I may come and go as I please, I don’t live there”. She did not want to live with Brazilians in a Brazilian neighbourhood, but believed that she had the opportunity to walk in and out of it whenever she wished. Johannes stated a similar opinion when he talked about his positive experience with having a second home in Brazil:

I can seek out the Amazon, I may seek out Rio de Janeiro, I may seek out Bolivia, Peru, Chile, if I wanted to. To be able to move some outside of the condominium. I could have been to the finca<sup>40</sup> for about a month, but I would not be able to do that all the time.<sup>t</sup>

Johannes and Lise’s visit to a Brazilian family’s finca which I have referred to in chapter five, provided Johannes with an experience with the Brazilian community and culture that he was happy to talk about as an example of good experiences when encountering a local community. Through this experience, he recognized the possibilities that came with having a second home in Brazil, and realized the many other adventures to do once present in the second home context. Still, the important aspect was that it was not a wish to establish a permanent residence within the Brazilian social arena, but it was rather that these experiences may be sought out and could be withdrawn from.

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<sup>40</sup> “Finca” is a word that Knut uses here to describe a more or less simple farm that the Brazilian family they visited lived at.

In the transferral of elements from the second home tradition, shaping homes in Brazil away from everyday life seemed to be important in that it provided the ability to relate to things of both unknown and known character. Eriksen states that “a typical reaction to unsafety is withdrawal” (2006:23, my translation), pointing to one of the main functions of the second home as a base. Being that the owners was able to withdraw from the context where they felt unsafe into something perceived to be known and familiar; a withdrawal recovered a feeling of safety. Eriksen’s comment upon the reaction to unsafety seemed right in this case, where the establishment of a base enabled the owners to seek out possibilities of such second home settlements, while at the same time allowing a sense of security in knowing that they are able to withdraw whenever they so desired. Eriksen also describes the reaction to insecurity for the individuals as being “just as important to try[ing] to redefine the situation in order to give it a glimpse of both” (2006:23, my translation). This statement points directly to the establishment of second homes as a base where the owners implemented known traditions and elements from home in order to feel safe, while at the same time being able to seek out the more unknown traits of Brazil. In that manner, this second home establishment made its owners relate both to the familiar and unfamiliar.

### *Closeness and Distance Through Material Conditions*

There is no community where absolutely everybody is included (Eriksen 2003:59), therefore borders of closeness and distance are important to maintain. These borders can be constructed both in a material and in a social manner. The material condition of the condominium and of the second home seemed to uphold the idea of withdrawal from something threatening outside. Within the condominium, the brick walls constituted a frame for interactions. Seeing that mostly all condominiums had such walls in Brazil, it was clear that this material condition was constructed in order to keep something out and other things in. In that way it was possible to see how the material functioned

as a way to keep the unknown outside the condominium and what was familiar and safe within these walls. Therefore, the second home worked as a complete withdrawal both from what was familiar in the Norwegian community and what was not considered to be within a realm of safety.

The second home, whether it was a house or an apartment, worked as a shelter when seeking out some privacy within the comfort of one's own home. This was made evident through the widespread use of curtains. One of the first things that were brought to the second home was often curtains in order to cover up a private life. Many second home owners that I visited pointed to the lack of curtains in their newly purchased apartment as something that had to be remedied in order for the home to be complete and to feel like *home*.

Withdrawing behind curtains in order to gain a certain amount of privacy seemed to be part of the effortless vacation many spoke of the need for.

Wanting some peace and quiet was demonstrated with the withdrawal from social interactions to their veranda or to an even more private area, that being inside the home with the curtains pulled. Using the second home as a base enabled my informants to withdraw whenever they wished, knowing that there was a society outside that could be explored. Through choosing whether or not to participate in it, the physical conditions of the condominium and the second home functioned as a way to demonstrate the withdrawal and to maintain the borders between the unknown and the known. Well aware that through withdrawing to the condominium or their second home, they chose not to be adventurous and explore the cultural difference believed to exist between Brazilians and Norwegians.

### **Concluding Remarks: Second Homes - A Story about Choice and Possibilities**

The story of the creation of second homes in Brazil seemed to be about choice and possibilities. Being able to spend money on purchasing a vacation property, *and* making it a second home were all parts of a practice of consumption. Through such a purchase, a consumption process started which



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developed a relation to the vacation property, which in my informants' case went from a vacation *property* to a second *home*. Keeping the familiar close and the unknown at a distance formed one of the main functions of the second home. It also established second homes in a realm between the known and the unknown, where they functioned as bases from which to move in and out of.

It seemed, therefore, that the establishment of the second home was not connected to Brazil *per se*. Instead, the owners felt a sense of belonging to the second home and to the community of Norwegians. When an adventurous vacation was among the things sought out in the initiation of a purchase, it represented a risk that lied both in the uncertainty of location and of the purchase in itself. Despite the perceived differences between Norwegian and Brazilian culture and the difficulties in communication, the establishment of second homes in Brazil worked well for the second home owners. That was largely due to the indefinite opportunities believed to be available in the second home context. It allowed the second home owners to participate both in the more intimidating arenas while at the same time it provided the possibility to relate to elements and people of a more familiar nature. This chapter has shown how the second home worked well in combining the two supposed opposites: the intimidating unknown and the safely familiar. The known was kept close through the implementation of familiar concepts such as *home* and *nationality*, while the unknown worked as a way to distance those elements and was therefore best kept close by, yet at a certain distance. This enabled two rather conflicting concepts to be represented through one consumption practice; namely the purchase and use of a second home.

## 7. Conclusion

Through this thesis I wanted to illuminate how the establishment of second homes in Natal took place. Looking into the acquisition and use of the second home has made it possible to see the home away from home in creation. This second home gained the function of a base in which the meeting and “co-existence” with a more or less present local community could be held at a distance, within a familiar zone. Keeping the unknown at a distance in the comforts of ones own home, allowed a certain type of safety to be established that was also visible in the acquisition. When the second home owners were able to move in and out of a realm of the known as well as the unfamiliar, the use of a base seemed to work as a way to balance diversity and familiarity. Thereby a choice could be made towards exploring adventure and social groupings. However, this was done on a somewhat various scale.

A secure framework that the owners maintained with their second home could be seen as an incompatible quest for safety within the unsafe. In itself, the possibility for such a settlement to provide its owners with a sense of safety while at the same time seeking out the unknown, could raise questions about the nature of the very practice of it. Where the motivations people posed revealed a wish to socially interact with Brazilians, interactions revolved, to a surprisingly great extent, around the Norwegian community. This raises the question: How is the second home ownership in Brazil in fact different from that in “Syden”, which ideas’ was presented in a former chapter? Motivations for ownership of second homes as revealed by my informants’ presents a space in which local contact can be experienced. Thereby, such a purchase enables an anti-chartered vacation for the owners’ that is different from their perceptions of “Syden”. As the use of the vacation property proved different by circling interactions and building the second home as a base for those

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interactions, the way it differs from that chartered vacation is not so clear with these second home establishments.

It could be argued that the possibilities for interacting socially with a local community were not very present as the condominiums were placed in areas without much local settlement. Even so, it did not seem as the social interactions in a place as Sagi, with a local community not (yet) so fully dependant on tourism, was a case that proved otherwise. Keeping that in mind, it may not be the lack of opportunities as much as the lack of language skills and the inability to feel secure outside the Norwegian community that worked as obstacles for social interactions. As such, Marc Aguè's notion of a non-place presented by Døving (1993:1) could just as well be applied for the establishment of second homes in Brazil, as to the vacations to "Syden". The owners' initial wish to escape the drawbacks of this type of tourism turned out, by that, to be the very nature of the settlement in Brazil. My informants, however, did not themselves reflect upon the importance of familiarity to that extent. Instead they saw the *possibility* to seek out something different as what separated the second home itself from such resembled settlement in "Syden".

In much the same way as secondary settlement in Natal may resemble the ideas made by my informants of "Syden" it could be that the implications that follow are similar. Some hints have been given throughout this thesis, which have had or may turn out to have a fair amount of implications. One is the sale of local property to foreign investment. This has already relocated much local community to other parts of Brazil and made room for foreign communities. Another may come from many Norwegians reluctant-ness to relate to locals. This is evident by not learning their language and by establishing relations primarily to those in the Norwegian community. It is not only language that exists as a barrier for social interactions in the second home context, but it is also a difference in the way of life that comes from culture and its routines. An explicit focus upon the difference in culture of the "other", made by my

informants, worked as a way to firmly establish them within the Norwegian community. That seemed to group together a fair amount of Norwegians in the same condominiums, at the same locations. The Norwegian community in Brazil functioned, in that, as a colony, gathered within an existing Brazilian society. The contact was great between those within that colony, but the parts outside were kept at a distance from oneself, the second home and the community.

Consequences that may come from second home settlement have been discussed by many, by example Novak (2003). There are many parallels to be drawn from Manilva-Sabinillas in Spain where Novak did her research, to the second home context in Brazil. When a sense of belonging is established to the second home and a Norwegian community in the way it was in Natal, it is not far from what Novak observed in Spain, where Norwegian colonies are established in different places. Novak claims that second home tourism can be seen to weigh heavier than work migration because the travelers are a financially strong group that the local community depend upon in order to improve their economic status (2003:131). In the same way the Norwegian second home owners in Brazil are a strong financial group. This could ultimately lead to some of the consequences that Novak describes: "Tourism does not only change the shape of the place, but also human attitudes, values and ways of life" (2003:131, my translation). In the case of Brazil, time and further investigation will tell what the consequences may be.

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## Original quotes in Norwegian from interviews:

a "Det er noe med den turistgreia som jeg ikke takler lenger. [...] Drive å gå rundt med folk som snakker norsk og svensk og dansk og engelsk hele tida, [...] Det er uinteressant, det er ikke noe morsomt. [...] Jeg drar ikke til Grand Canaria på ferie lenger. Det gjør jeg ikke. Å ligge på stranda i en uke. Hvis jeg vil oppleve noe så gidder jeg jo ikke å gjøre det." (Silje)

b "Så er det ett eller annet med det eksotiske som gjør at når du først drar på tur så drar du litt langt, til noe som er annerledes, noe annet enn det vi har her hjemme da. At kulturforskjellen gjør at det er opplevd som annerledes enn det du er vant til hjemme. Det også er jo en viktig del av pakka. At man faktisk har med forskjeller å gjøre." (Ole-Petter)

c "For at det er noe med det at Brasil er et fattig land, og vi kunne tenke oss å oppleve litt av det Brasilianske. Vi er ikke her for å bare sitte sammen med norske, [...] da er det viktig at sånn som Trym også, får oppleve det brasilianske folket, [...] får litt kjennskap til hvordan folk har det nedi her. For han har ikke noe vondt av å vite og se at her er det mange fattige unger [...] og det synes jeg er viktig for han at han vokser på og får forståelsen for at sånn har enkelte mennesker det altså." (Lise)

d "[V]i kan jo kanskje lære mer av dem å sette pris på livet [...] Man har så godt av det. Se hvordan andre har det. [...] Jeg vet liksom ikke om jeg gjør noe mindre av det jeg gjorde før forde, det er bare det at du får en litt annen tankegang kanskje og det er jo bra. At en faktisk ikke overser det. Men man må ta med seg noen av inntrykkene når en kommer tilbake." (Silje)

e "Så det anbefaler alle som begynner å nærme seg, å ikke vente til de blir pensjonister, men starte gjerne noen år før dem blir pensjonister. Slik at du kan bygge en del relasjoner og sånn som er litt viktig. Det der med å starte opp som pensjonist, det blir aldri til at du gjør det. Du skal starte i god tid, du må øve deg. [...] Er du plutselig seksti, sekstito år så er du plutselig usikker på det meste." (Petter)

f "[H]an har lært oss hvordan vi skal kjøre, som parkeringa. Her er det et innfløkt system skjønner du. Når du skal parkere så kommer det en gutt, og da gjør du som han sier også gjør du sånn (viser opp med tommelen), og når du kommer tilbake så står bilen der. Men hvis du ikke gir han det tegnet der så ser du ikke bilen igjen, da knuser de ruta. Så gir du han litt småpenger. [...] ellers så hadde vi ikke skjønt noen ting vi. De henter oss på flyplassen også reiser vi på butikken også tar han med handlevogna og går rundt å hjelper oss å handle [...] Og forteller litt på hvilken måte de gjør ting. Det er rett og slett et grunnkurs! [...] Ja, for tenk hvis jeg skulle stått på flyplassen der og kommet ut midt på natta, det hadde ikke gått. Helt avhengig av disse gutta der, det gjør at du trives for da gjør du ikke så mye galt og du skjønner litt mer med en gang." (Olav)

g "Når sommeren og våren kommer så er vi på Fjellstrand og går ute der for vi liker det der med å gå og pusle. Torill liker hagen og jeg liker å gå og male og å ordne litt ting, så vi slapper litt av med det." (Jan-Erik)

h “[H]vorfor ikke la en brasilianer få jobbe og tjene seg de kronene da. Og vi kan ta oss litt mer ferie. For det er ikke det som er viktig for oss, å stå ute og male og gjøre ting. Da er det bedre at vi får gå og bli kjent her.” (Lise)

i “Vi har gjort arbeidet hjemme sjøl, men her nede så har vi mer eller mindre nesten så vi har ferie. Vi er her for å sole oss, for å bade og oppleve lokalbefolkningen, trekke de kulturelle, i hvert fall tror jeg at jeg og Anita er sånn. Så vi setter bort arbeidet her. Da legger vi bort arbeidsklærna.” (Johannes)

j “En hytte der er alt primitivt, du bærer vann og fyrer med ved også har du friluftaktivitet. Du går på ski, du går turer, fisker litt og sånne ting, mens her bor du. Jeg vil heller si at det blir mer som et andre hjem, på den tingen at det er mer behagelig å bo her.” (Robert)

k ” [D]et var litt trygt også å vite at det bare var nordmenn og svensker som var der. Siden det var litt usikkerhet med hensyn til investering, altså du er alltid litt usikker når du kjøper i et fremmed land. [...] Det at det var en trygghet i den forstand at du skal etablere borettslag, du skal sende penger, altså betale fellesutgifter. [...] Ja, i forhold til å organisere hele eiendomsdriften og sånn så var det viktig at det var nordmenn. Hadde det bare vært brasilianere så liksom, har du litt mindre kontroll på fellesutgifter for eksempel. Hvordan i huleste betaler dem? Når det er nordmenn så veit du liksom har de, nordmenn tror jeg sånn stort sett bra betalere da.” (Hans)

l “Jo, det betydde veldig mye, hvis ikke så hadde vi nok ikke kjøpt. Vi følte at vi er avhengig både å kjøpe norsk og ha, for jeg føler meg tryggere da. Og at det er nordmenn som bor her. Jeg ville nok ikke ha flyttet inn i et condominium hvis det var bare portugisere i for eksempel. Så du kan si det er nok sikkert et alright folk, det er ikke det, men det er altså det samholdet du får når du forstår dem og har samme kultur.” (Håkon)

m “Vi trodde at det skulle være flere på vår alder, og så var de omtrent som Benedicte, mellom tjuefem og tredve år. Og vi hadde det jo så kjempefint med grilling og det hele, så vi følte oss virkelig som en stor familie.” (Torill)

n “[D]et er også sånn at vi sitter ned på samme flate og det blir mye mer sosialt, synes vi. Så vi har veldig mye samkvem med hverandre. I motsetning til om vi skulle sitti på en veranda for oss selv. Også har vi de fellesområdene.” (Robert)

o “Vi liker oss veldig godt i Thailand, [...] og folk er veldig hyggelige og veldig søte og smilende, men det er litt mer ekte i Brasil. Det er ikke det statiske smilet som går igjen hele tiden. Brasilianere smiler når de har lyst. [...] Han møter deg optimistisk og positiv også er det opp til deg selv hvordan du oppfører deg. I Thailand der kan du nesten stå å banke dem i hodet og de står og smiler uansett. Det gjør ikke en brasilianer.” (Jan-Erik)

p “Ja det er en helt annen stemning der og de som snakker til deg, snakker til deg fordi de har lyst til å være hyggelige med deg eller bli venner med deg eller ikke for at de skal selge deg noe eller utnytte deg” (Øyvind)

q “Jeg tror det er mye hva vi gjør det til selv. Veldig mye hva man gjør det til selv altså. Det tror jeg. Asså, for det er klart, det når vi var den kvelden på det karnevalet, da treffer du mye og du ser den brasilianske kulturen. Men du skal også lære deg litt om kulturen, før du begynner å gå rett inni det altså.” (Lise)

r ” det var et grillparty borte på Arituba Tropical og dem hadde invitert alle som jobbet på anlegget og da hadde vi grillparty på stranda. [...] Vi fikk jo ikke pratet da, men da får vi i hvert fall gitt et signal om at vi vil være sammen med dem. [...] da blir det sånn at dem føler tilhørigheten, så er det mange av dem så dem kan jo snakke sammen og vi også. Det blir ikke noe engstelig rundt om det kan du si.” (Olav)

s ”Vi opplevde jo den gjestfriheten som var der og [...] det at når vi kommer inn så blir vi tilbydd mat, det er ikke noe mer der de kunne tilbydd kanskje fordi dem er fattige, men det å tilby en dusj dersom dem har det så gjør dem det. Og etter du har spist så finner du en hammock og legger deg. Det koster ikke noe men det viser hva de har å tilby der og da setter dem veldig pris på at du gjør det. Selv om kanskje ikke det at dem mener det hundre prosent av sjela si at du bruker opp kanskje vannet deres eller noe sånt, eller tar opp senga til en annen, men det er sånn, på grunn at de ikke kan tilby noe annet så tilbyr de i hvert fall det, som en gjestfrihet og det er veldig fint. De byr av seg sjøl.” (Johannes)

t ” [J]eg kan oppsøke Amazonas, jeg kan oppsøke Rio de Janeiro, jeg kan oppsøke Bolivia, Peru, Chile, hvis jeg ville. Å bevege seg litt på utsiden av condominoen. Jeg kunne vært på fincaen i en måned, men jeg hadde ikke orket hele tiden.” (Johannes)